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UNSPOKEN SERMONS

By GEORGE MAC DONALD
AUTHOR OF "WITHIN AND WITHOUT," "PHANTASTES," "ALEC FORBES," ETC. ETC.

Comf rt ye, c mfort ye my peo[p]

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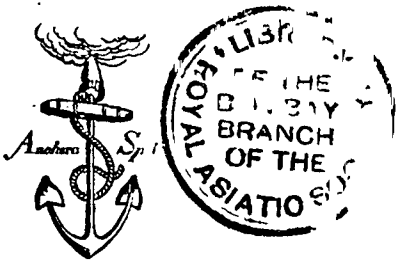

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God
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These Ears of Corn,

gathered and rubbed in my hands

upon broken Sabbaths,

I offer first to my Wife,

and then to my other Friends.

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THE CHILD IN THE MIDST.

And he came to Capernaum: and, being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.—MARK ix. 33-37.

OF this passage in the life of our Lord, the account given by St Mark is the more complete. But it may be enriched and its lesson rendered yet more evident from the record of St Matthew.

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and

become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

These passages record a lesson our Lord gave his disciples against ambition, against emulation. It is not for the sake of setting forth this lesson that I write about these words of our Lord, but for the sake of a truth, a revelation about God, in which his great argument reaches its height.

He took a little child—possibly a child of Peter; for St Mark says that the incident fell at Capernaum, and "in the house,"—a child therefore with some of the characteristics of Peter, whose very faults were those of a childish nature. We might expect the

child of such a father to possess the childlike countenance and bearing essential to the conveyance of the lesson which I now desire to set forth as contained in the passage.

For it must be confessed that there are children who are not childlike. One of the saddest and not least common sights in the world is the face of a child whose mind is so brimful of worldly wisdom that the human childishness has vanished from it, as well as the divine childlikeness. For the *childlike* is the divine, and the very word "marshals me the way that I was going." But I must delay my ascent to the final argument in order to remove a possible difficulty, which, in turning us towards one of the grandest truths, turns us away from the truth which the Lord had in view here.

The difficulty is this: Is it like the *Son of man* to pick out the beautiful child, and leave the common child unnoticed? What thank would he have in that? Do not even the publicans as much as that? And

do not our hearts revolt against the thought of it? Shall the mother's heart cleave closest to the deformed of her little ones? and shall "Christ as we believe him" choose according to the sight of the eye? Would he turn away from the child born in sin and taught iniquity, on whose pinched face hunger and courage and love of praise have combined to stamp the cunning of avaricious age, and take to his arms the child of honest parents, such as Peter and his wife, who could not help looking more good than the other? That were not he who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Let the man who loves his brother say which, in his highest moments of love to God, which, when he is nearest to that ideal humanity whereby *a man* shall be a hiding-place from the wind, he would clasp to his bosom of refuge. Would it not be the evil-faced child, because he needed it most? Yes; in God's name, yes. For is not that the divine way? Who that has read of the lost sheep, or the found prodigal, even if he had no spirit bearing wit-

ness with his spirit, will dare to say that it is not the divine way? Often, no doubt, it will *appear* otherwise, for the childlike child is easier to save than the other, and may *come* first. But the rejoicing in heaven is greatest over the sheep that has wandered the farthest —perhaps was born on the wild hill-side, and not in the fold at all. For such a prodigal, the elder brother in heaven prays thus—"Lord, think about my poor brother more than about me, for I know thee, and am at rest in thee. I am with thee always."

Why, then, do I think it necessary to say that this child was probably Peter's child, and certainly a child that looked childlike because it was childlike? No amount of evil can *be* the child. No amount of evil, not to say in the face, but in the habits, or even in the heart of the child, can make it cease to be a child, can annihilate the divine idea of childhood which moved in the heart of God when he made that child after his own image. It is the essential of which God speaks, the real by which he judges, the undying of which he is the God.

Heartily I grant this. And if the object of our Lord in taking the child in his arms had been to teach love to our neighbour, love to humanity, the ugliest child he could have found, would, perhaps, have served his purpose best. The man who receives any, and more plainly he who receives the repulsive child, because he is the offspring of God, because he is his own brother born, must receive the Father in thus receiving the child. Whosoever gives a cup of cold water to a little one, refreshes the heart of the Father. To do as God does, is to receive God; to do a service to one of his children is to receive the Father. Hence, any human being, especially if wretched and woe-begone and outcast, would do as well as a child for the purpose of setting forth this love of God to the human being. Therefore something more is probably intended here. The lesson will be found to lie not in the *humanity*, but in the *childhood* of the child.

Again, if the disciples could have seen that the essential childhood was meant, and not a blurred and half-obliterated childhood, the most selfish child might have

done as well, but could have done no better than the one we have supposed in whom the true childhood is more evident. But when the child was employed as a manifestation, utterance, and sign of the truth that lay in his childhood, in order that the eyes as well as the ears should be channels to the heart, it was essential—not that the child should be beautiful but—that the child should be childlike; that those qualities which wake in our hearts, at sight, the love peculiarly belonging to childhood, which is, indeed, but the perception of the childhood, should at least glimmer out upon the face of the *chosen type*. Would such an unchildlike child as we see sometimes, now in a great house, clothed in purple and lace, now in a squalid close, clothed in dirt and rags, have been fit for our Lord's purpose, when he had to say that his listeners must become like this child? when the lesson he had to present to them was that of the divine nature of the child, that of childlikeness? Would there not have been a contrast between the child and our Lord's words, ludicrous except for its horror, especially seeing

he set forth the individuality of the child by saying, "this little child," "one of such children," and "these little ones that believe in me?" Even the feelings of pity and of love that would arise in a good heart upon further contemplation of such a child, would have turned it quite away from the lesson our Lord intended to give.

That this lesson did lie, not in the humanity, but in the childhood of the child, let me now show more fully. The disciples had been disputing who should be the greatest, and the Lord wanted to show them that such a dispute had nothing whatever to do with the way things went in his kingdom. Therefore, as a specimen of his subjects, he took a child and set him before them. It was not, it could not be, in virtue of his humanity, it was in virtue of his childhood that this child was thus presented as representing a subject of the kingdom. It was not to show the scope but the nature of the kingdom. He told them they could not enter into the kingdom save by becoming little children—by humbling themselves. For the idea of ruling was excluded where

childlikeness was the one essential quality. It was to be no more who should rule, but who should serve; no more who should look down upon his fellows from the conquered heights of authority—even of sacred authority, but who should look up honouring humanity, and ministering unto it, so that humanity itself might at length be persuaded of its own honour as a temple of the living God. It was to impress this lesson upon them that he showed them the child. Therefore, I repeat, the lesson lay in the *childhood* of the child.

But I now approach my especial object; for this lesson led to the enunciation of a yet higher truth, upon which it was founded, and from which indeed it sprung. Nothing is required of man that is not first in God. It is because God is perfect that we are required to be perfect. And it is for the revelation of God to all the human souls, that they may be saved by knowing him, and so becoming like him, that this child is thus chosen and set before them in the gospel. He who, in giving the cup of water or the embrace,

comes into contact with the essential childhood of the child—that is, embraces the *childish* humanity of it, (not he who embraces it out of love to humanity, or even love to God as the Father of it)—is partaker of the meaning, that is, the blessing, of this passage. It is the recognition of the childhood as divine that will show the disciple how vain the strife after relative place or honour in the great kingdom.

For it is *In my name.* This means *as representing me;* and, therefore, *as being like me.* Our Lord could not commission any one to be received in his name who could not more or less represent him; for there would be untruth and unreason. Moreover, he had just been telling the disciples that they must become like this child; and now, when he tells them to receive *such* a little child in his name, it must surely imply something in common between them all—something in which the child and Jesus meet—something in which the child and the disciples meet. What else can that be than the spiritual childhood? *In my name*

does not mean *because I will it.* An arbitrary utterance of the will of our Lord would certainly find ten thousand to obey it, even to suffering, for one that will be able to receive such a vital truth of his character as is contained in the words; but it is not obedience alone that our Lord will have, but obedience to the *truth*, that is, to the Light of the World, truth beheld and known. *In my name*, if we take all we can find in it, the full meaning which alone will harmonize and make the passage a whole, involves a revelation from resemblance, from fitness to represent and so reveal. He who receives a child, then, in the name of Jesus, does so, perceiving wherein Jesus and the child are one, what is common to them. He must not only see the *ideal* child in the child he receives—that reality of loveliness which constitutes true childhood, but must perceive that the child is like Jesus, or rather, that the Lord is like the child, and may be embraced, yea, is embraced, by every heart childlike enough to embrace a child for the sake of

his childness. I do not therefore say that none but those who are thus conscious in the act partake of the blessing. But a special sense, a lofty knowledge of blessedness, belongs to the act of embracing a child as the visible likeness of the Lord himself. For the blessedness is the perceiving of the truth—the blessing is the truth itself—the God-known truth, that the Lord has the heart of a child. The man who perceives this knows in himself that he is blessed—blessed because that is true.

But the argument as to the meaning of our Lord's words, *in my name*, is incomplete, until we follow our Lord's enunciation to its second and higher stage: "He that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." It will be allowed that the connection between the first and second link of the chain will probably be the same as the connection between the second and third. I do not say it is necessarily so; for I aim at no logical certainty. I aim at showing, rather than at proving, to my reader, by means of my sequences, the idea

to which I am approaching. For if, once he beholds it, he cannot receive it, if it does not shew itself to him to be true, there would not only be little use in convincing him by logic, but I allow that he can easily suggest other possible connections in the chain, though, I assert, none so symmetrical. What, then, is the connection between the second and third? How is it that he who receives the Son receives the Father? Because the Son is as the Father; and he whose heart can perceive the essential in Christ, has the essence of the Father—that is, sees and holds to it by that recognition, and is one therewith by recognition and worship. What, then, next, is the connection between the first and second? I think the same. "He that sees the essential in this child, the pure childhood, sees that which is the essence of me," grace and truth—in a word, childlikeness. It follows not that the former is perfect as the latter, but it is the same in kind, and therefore, manifest in the child, reveals that which is in Jesus.

Then to receive a child in the name of Jesus is to receive Jesus; to receive Jesus is to receive God; therefore to receive the child is to receive God himself.

That such is the feeling of the words, and that such was the feeling in the heart of our Lord when he spoke them, I may show from another golden thread that may be traced through the shining web of his golden words.

What is the kingdom of Christ? A rule of love, of truth—a rule of service. The king is the chief servant in it. "The kings of the earth have dominion: it shall not be so among you." "The Son of Man came to minister." "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The great Workman is the great King, labouring for his own. So he that would be greatest among them, and come nearest to the King himself, must be the servant of all. It is *like king like subject* in the kingdom of heaven. No rule of force, as of one kind over another kind. It is the rule of *kind*, of *nature*, of deepest nature—of *God*. If, then, to enter into this

kingdom, we must become children, the spirit of children must be its pervading spirit throughout, from lowly subject to lowliest king. The lesson added by St Luke to the presentation of the child is: "For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great." And St Matthew says: "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Hence the sign that passes between king and subject. The subject kneels in homage to the kings of the earth: the heavenly king takes his subject in his arms. This is the sign of the kingdom between them. This is the all-pervading relation of the kingdom.

To give one glance backward, then:

To receive the child because God receives it, or for its humanity, is one thing; to receive it because it is like God, or for its childhood, is another. The former will do little to destroy ambition. Alone it might argue only a wider scope to it, because it admits all men to the arena of the strife. But the latter strikes at the very

root of emulation. As soon as even service is done for the honour and not for the service-sake, the doer is that moment outside the kingdom. But when we receive the child in the name of Christ, the very childhood that we receive to our arms is humanity. We love its humanity in its childhood, for childhood is the deepest heart of humanity—its divine heart; and so in the name of the child we receive all humanity. Therefore, although the lesson is not about humanity, but about childhood, it returns upon our race, and we receive our race with wider arms and deeper heart. There is, then, no other lesson lost by receiving this; no heartlessness shown in insisting that the child was a lovable—a childlike child.

If there is in heaven a picture of that wonderful teaching, doubtless we shall see represented in it a dim childhood shining from the faces of all that group of disciples of which the centre is the Son of God with a child in his arms. The childhood, dim in the faces of the men, must be shining trustfully clear in the face of the

child. But in the face of the Lord himself, the childhood will be triumphant—all his wisdom, all his truth upholding that radiant serenity of faith in his father. Verily, O Lord, this childhood is life. Verily, O Lord, when thy tenderness shall have made the world great, then, children like thee, will all men smile in the face of the great God.

But to advance now to the highest point of this teaching of our Lord: "He that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." To receive a child in the name of God is to receive God himself. How to receive him? As alone he can be received,—by knowing him as he is. To know him is to have him in us. And that we may know him, let us now receive this revelation of him, in the words of our Lord himself. Here is the argument of highest import founded upon the teaching of our master in the utterance before us.

God is represented in Jesus, for that God is like Jesus: Jesus is represented in the child, for that Jesus is like the child. Therefore God is represented in the

child, for that he is like the child. God is child-like. In the true vision of this fact lies the receiving of God in the child.

Having reached this point, I have nothing more to do with the argument; for if the Lord meant this—that is, if this be a truth, he that is able to receive it will receive it: he that hath ears to hear it will hear it. For our Lord's arguments are for the presentation of the truth, and the truth carries its own conviction to him who is able to receive it.

But the word of one who has seen this truth may help the dawn of a like perception in those who keep their faces turned towards the east and its aurora; for men may have eyes, and, seeing dimly, want to see more. Therefore let us brood a little over the idea itself, and see whether it will not come forth so as to commend itself to that spirit, which, one with the human spirit where it dwells, searches the deep things of God. For, although the true heart may at first be shocked at the truth, as Peter was shocked when he said, "That be

far from thee, Lord," yet will it, after a season, receive it and rejoice in it.

Let me then ask, do you believe in the Incarnation? And if you do, let me ask further, Was Jesus ever less divine than God? I answer for you, Never. He was lower, but never less divine. Was he not a child then? You answer, "Yes, but not like other children." I ask, "Did he not look like other children?" If he looked like them and was not like them, the whole was a deception, a masquerade at best. I say he was a child, whatever more he might be. God is man, and infinitely more. Our Lord became flesh, but did not *become* man. He took on him the form of man: he was man already. And he was, is, and ever shall be divinely childlike. He could never have been a child if he would ever have ceased to be a child, for in him the transient found nothing. Childhood belongs to the divine nature. Obedience, then, is as divine as Will, Service as divine as Rule. How? Because they are one in their nature; they are both a doing of the truth.

The love in them is the same. The Fatherhood and the Sonship are one, save that the Fatherhood looks down lovingly, and the Sonship looks up lovingly. Love is all. And God is all in all. He is ever seeking to get down to us—to be the divine man to us. And we are ever saying, "That be far from thee, Lord!" We are careful, in our unbelief, over the divine dignity, of which he is too grand to think. Better pleasing to God, it needs little daring to say, is the audacity of Job, who, rushing into his presence, and flinging the door of his presence-chamber to the wall, like a troubled, it may be angry, but yet faithful child, calls aloud in the ear of him whose perfect Fatherhood he has yet to learn: "Am I a sea or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?"

Let us dare, then, to climb the height of divine truth to which this utterance of our Lord would lead us.

Does it not lead us up hither: that the devotion of God to his creatures is perfect? that he does not think about himself but about them? that he wants nothing

for himself, but finds his blessedness in the outgoing of blessedness?

Ah! it is a terrible—shall it be a lonely glory this? We will draw near with our human response, our abandonment of self in the faith of Jesus. He gives himself to us—shall not we give ourselves to him? Shall we not give ourselves to each other whom he loves?

For when is the child the ideal child in our eyes and to our hearts? Is it not when with gentle hand he takes his father by the beard, and turns that father's face up to his brothers and sisters to kiss? when even the lovely selfishness of love-seeking has vanished, and the heart is absorbed in loving?

In this, then, is God like the child: that he is simply and altogether our friend, our father—our more than friend, father, and mother—our infinite love-perfect God. Grand and strong beyond all that human imagination can conceive of poet-thinking and kingly action, he is delicate beyond all that human tenderness can conceive of husband or wife, homely beyond all that human

heart can conceive of father or mother. He has not two thoughts about us. With him all is simplicity of purpose and meaning and effort and end—namely, that we should be as he is, think the same thoughts, mean the same things, possess the same blessedness. It is so plain that any one may see it, every one ought to see it, every one shall see it. It must be so. He is utterly true and good to us, nor shall anything withstand his will.

How terribly, then, have the theologians misrepresented God in the measures of the low and showy, not the lofty and simple humanities! Nearly all of them represent him as a great King on a grand throne, thinking how grand he is, and making it the business of his being and the end of his universe to keep up his glory, wielding the bolts of a Jupiter against them that take his name in vain. They would not allow this, but follow out what they say, and it comes much to this. Brothers, have you found our king? There he is, kissing little children and saying they are like God. There he is at

table with the head of a fisherman lying on his bosom, and somewhat heavy at heart that even he, the beloved disciple, cannot yet understand him well. The simplest peasant who loves his children and his sheep were—no, not a truer, for the other is false, but—a true type of our God beside that monstrosity of a monarch.

The God who is ever uttering himself in the changeful profusions of nature; who takes millions of years to form a soul that shall understand him and be blessed; who never needs to be, and never is, in haste; who welcomes the simplest thought of truth or beauty as the return for seed he has sown upon the old fallows of eternity; who rejoices in the response of a faltering moment to the age-long cry of his wisdom in the streets; the God of music, of painting, of building, the Lord of Hosts, the God of mountains and oceans; whose laws go forth from one unseen point of wisdom, and thither return without an atom of loss; the God of history working in time unto christianity; this God is the God of little children, and

he alone can be perfectly, abandonedly simple and devoted. The deepest, purest love of a woman has its well-spring in him. Our longing desires can no more exhaust the fulness of the treasures of the Godhead, than our imagination can touch their measure. Of him not a thought, not a joy, not a hope of one of his creatures can pass unseen; and while one of them remains unsatisfied, he is not Lord over all.

Therefore, with angels and with archangels, with the spirits of the just made perfect, with the little children of the kingdom, yea, with the Lord himself, and for all them that know him not, we praise and magnify and laud his name in itself, saying *Our Father.* We do not draw back for that we are unworthy, nor even for that we are hard-hearted and care not for the good. For it is his childlikeness that makes him our God and Father. The perfection of his relation to us swallows up all our imperfections, all our defects, all our evils; for our childhood is

born of his fatherhood. That man is perfect in faith who can come to God in the utter dearth of his feelings and his desires, without a glow or an aspiration, with the weight of low thoughts, failures, neglects, and wandering forgetfulness, and say to him, "Thou art my refuge, because thou art my home."

Such a faith will not lead to presumption. The man who can pray such a prayer will know better than another, that God is not mocked; that he is not a man that he should repent; that tears and entreaties will not work on him to the breach of one of his laws; that for God to give a man because he asked for it that which was not in harmony with his laws of truth and right, would be to damn him—to cast him into the outer darkness. And he knows that out of that prison the childlike, imperturbable God will let no man come till he has paid the uttermost farthing.

And if he should forget this, the God to whom he belongs does not forget it, does not forget him.

Life is no series of chances with a few providences sprinkled between to keep up a justly failing belief, but one providence of God; and the man shall not live long before life itself shall remind him, it may be in agony of soul, of that which he has forgotten. When he prays for comfort, the answer may come in dismay and terror and the turning aside of the Father's countenance; for love itself will, for love's sake, turn the countenance away from that which is not lovely; and he will have to read, written upon the dark wall of his imprisoned conscience, the words, awful and glorious, *Our God is a consuming fire.*

THE CONSUMING FIRE.

Our God is a consuming fire. — HEBREWS xii. 29.

NOTHING is inexorable but love. Love which will yield to prayer is imperfect and poor. Nor is it then the love that yields, but its alloy. For if at the voice of entreaty love conquers displeasure, it is love asserting itself, not love yielding its claims. It is not love that grants a boon unwillingly; still less is it love that answers a prayer to the wrong and hurt of him who prays. Love is one, and love is changeless.

For love loves unto purity. Love has ever in view the absolute loveliness of that which it beholds. Where loveliness is incomplete, and love cannot love its fill of loving, it spends itself to make more lovely, that it may love more; it strives for perfection, even that itself may

be perfected—not in itself, but in the object. As it was love that first created humanity, so even human love, in proportion to its divinity, will go on creating the beautiful for its own outpouring. There is nothing eternal but that which loves and can be loved, and love is ever climbing towards the consummation when such shall be the universe, imperishable, divine.

Therefore all that is not beautiful in the beloved, all that comes between and is not of love's kind, must be destroyed.

And our God is a consuming fire.

If this be hard to understand, it is as the simple, absolute truth is hard to understand. It may be centuries of ages before a man comes to see a truth—ages of strife, of effort, of aspiration. But when once he does see it, it is so plain that he wonders he could have lived without seeing it. That he did not understand it sooner was simply and only that he did not see it. To see a truth, to know what it is, to understand it, and to love it, are all one. There is many a motion towards it, many a misery for

want of it, many a cry of the conscience against the neglect of it, many a dim longing for it as an unknown need before at length the eyes come awake, and the darkness of the dreamful night yields to the light of the sun of truth. But once beheld it is for ever. To see one divine fact is to stand face to face with essential eternal life.

For this vision of truth God has been working for ages of ages. For this simple condition, this apex of life, upon which a man wonders like a child that he cannot make other men see as he sees, the whole labour of God's science, history, poetry—from the time when the earth gathered itself into a lonely drop of fire from the red rim of the driving sun-wheel to the time when Alexander John Scott worshipped him from its face—was evolving truth upon truth in lovely vision, in torturing law, never lying, never repenting; and for this will the patience of God labour while there is yet a human soul whose eyes have not been opened, whose child-heart has not yet been born in him. For this one condition of humanity, this

simple beholding, has all the outthinking of God flowed in forms innumerable and changeful from the foundation of the world; and for this, too, has the divine destruction been going forth; that his life might be our life, that in us, too, might dwell that same consuming fire which is essential love.

Let us look at the utterance of the apostle which is crowned with this lovely terror: "Our God is a consuming fire."

"Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire."—We have received a kingdom that cannot be moved—whose nature is immovable: let us have grace to serve the Consuming Fire, our God, with divine fear; not with the fear that cringes and craves, but with the bowing down of all thoughts, all delights, all loves before him who is the life of them al., and will have them all pure. The kingdom he has given us cannot be moved, because

it has nothing weak in it: it is of the eternal world, the world of being, of truth. We, therefore, must worship him with a fear pure as the kingdom is unshakeable. He will shake heaven and earth, that only the unshakeable may remain, (*verse* 27): he is a consuming fire, that only that which cannot be consumed may stand forth eternal. It is the nature of God, so terribly pure that it destroys all that is not pure as fire, which demands like purity in our worship. He will have purity. It is not that the fire will burn us if we do not worship thus; but that the fire will burn us until we worship thus; yea, will go on burning within us after all that is foreign to it has yielded to its force, no longer with pain and consuming, but as the highest consciousness of life, the presence of God. When evil, which alone is consumable, shall have passed away in his fire from the dwellers in the immovable kingdom, the nature of man shall look the nature of God in the face, and his fear shall then be pure; for an eternal, that is a

holy fear, must spring from a knowledge of the nature, not from a sense of the power. But that which cannot be consumed must be one within itself, a simple existence; therefore in such a soul the fear towards God will be one with the homeliest love. Yea, the fear of God will cause a man to flee, not from him, but from himself; not from him, but to him, the Father of himself, in terror lest he should do Him wrong or his neighbour wrong. And the first words which follow for the setting forth of that grace whereby we may serve God acceptably are these — "Let brotherly love continue." To love our brother is to worship the Consuming Fire.

The symbol of *the consuming fire* would seem to have been suggested to the writer by the fire that burned on the mountain of the old law. That fire was part of the revelation of God there made to the Israelites. Nor was it the first instance of such a revelation. The symbol of God's presence, before which Moses had to put off his shoes, and to which it was not safe for him to draw

near, was a fire that *did not consume the bush in which it burned.* Both revelations were of terror. But the same symbol employed by a writer of the New Testament should mean more, not than it meant before, but than it was before employed to express; for it could not have been employed to express more than it was possible for them to perceive. What else than terror could a nation of slaves, into whose very souls the rust of their chains had eaten, in whose memory lingered the smoke of the flesh-pots of Egypt, who, rather than not eat of the food they liked best, would have gone back to the house of their bondage—what else could such a nation see in that fire than terror and destruction? How should they think of purification by fire? They had yet no such condition of mind as could generate such a thought. And if they had had the thought, the notion of the suffering involved would soon have overwhelmed the notion of purification. Nor would such a nation have listened to any teaching that was not supported by terror. Fear was that for which they were fit. They

had no worship for any being of whom they had not to be afraid.

Was then this show upon Mount Sinai a device to move obedience, such as bad nurses employ with children? a hint of vague and false horror? Was it not a true revelation of God?

If it was not a true revelation, it was none at all, and the story is either false, or the whole display was a political trick of Moses. Those who can read the mind of Moses will not easily believe the latter, and those who understand the scope of the pretended revelation, will see no reason for supposing the former. That which would be politic, were it a deception, is not therefore excluded from the possibility of another source. Some people believe so little in a cosmos or ordered world, that the very argument of fitness is a reason for unbelief.

At all events, if God showed them these things, God showed them what was true. It was a revelation of himself. He will not put on a mask. He puts on a face. He will not speak out of flaming fire if that flam-

ing fire is alien to him, if there is nothing in him for that flaming fire to reveal. Be his children ever so brutish, he will not terrify them with a lie.

It was a revelation, but a partial one; a true symbol, not a final vision.

No revelation can be other than partial. If for true revelation a man must be told all the truth, then farewell to revelation; yea, farewell to the sonship. For what revelation, other than a partial, can the highest spiritual condition receive of the infinite God? But it is not therefore untrue because it is partial. Relatively to a lower condition of the receiver, a more partial revelation might be truer than that would be which constituted a fuller revelation to one in a higher condition; for the former might reveal much to him, the latter might reveal nothing. Only, whatever it might reveal, if its nature were such as to preclude development and growth, thus chaining the man to its incompleteness, it would be but a false revelation fighting against all the divine laws of human existence. The true revelation

rouses the desire to know more by the truth of its incompleteness.

Here was a nation at its lowest: could it receive anything but a partial revelation, a revelation of fear? How should the Hebrews be other than terrified at that which was opposed to all they knew of themselves, beings judging it good to honour a golden calf? Such as they were, they did well to be afraid. They were in a better condition, acknowledging if only a terror *above* them, flaming on that unknown mountain height, than stooping to worship the idol below them. Fear is nobler than sensuality. Fear is better than no God, better than a god made with hands. In that fear lay deep hidden the sense of the infinite. The worship of fear is true, although very low; and though not acceptable to God in itself, for only the worship of spirit and of truth is acceptable to him, yet even in his sight it is precious. For he regards men not as they are merely, but as they shall be; not as they shall be merely, but as they are now growing, or

capable of growing, towards that image after which he made them that they might grow to it. Therefore a thousand stages, each in itself all but valueless, are of inestimable worth as the necessary and connected gradations of an infinite progress. A condition which of declension would indicate a devil, may of growth indicate a saint. So far then the revelation, not being final any more than complete, and calling forth the best of which they were now capable, so making future and higher revelation possible, may have been a true one.

But we shall find that this very revelation of fire is itself, in a higher sense, true to the mind of the rejoicing saint as to the mind of the trembling sinner. For the former sees farther into the meaning of the fire, and knows better what it will do to him. It is a symbol which needed not to be superseded, only unfolded. While men take part *with* their sins, while they feel as if, separated from their sins, they would be no longer themselves, how can they understand that the lightning word is a Saviour—that word which

pierces to the dividing between the man and the evil, which will slay the sin and give life to the sinner? Can it be any comfort to them to be told that God loves them so that he will burn them clean. Can the cleansing of the fire appear to them anything beyond what it must always, more or less, be—a process of torture? They do not want to be clean, and they cannot bear to be tortured. Can they then do other, or can we desire that they should do other, than fear God, even with the fear of the wicked, until they learn to love him with the love of the holy. To them Mount Sinai is crowned with the signs of vengeance. And is not God ready to do unto them even as they fear, though with another feeling and a different end from any which they are capable of supposing? He is against sin: in so far as, and while, they and sin are one, he is against them—against their desires, their aims, their fears, and their hopes; and thus he is altogether and always *for them*. That thunder and lightning and tempest, that blackness

torn with the sound of a trumpet, that visible horror billowed with the voice of words, was all but a faint image to the senses of the slaves of what God thinks and feels against vileness and selfishness, of the unrest of unassuageable repulsion with which he regards such conditions; that so the stupid people, fearing somewhat to do as they would, might leave a little room for that grace to grow in them, which would at length make them see that evil, and not fire, is the fearful thing; yea, so transform them that they would gladly rush up into the trumpet-blast of Sinai to escape the flutes around the golden calf. Could they have understood this, they would have needed no Mount Sinai. It was a true, and of necessity a partial revelation—partial in order to be true.

Even Moses, the man of God, was not ready to receive the revelation in store; not ready, although from love to his people he prayed that God would even blot him out of his book of life. If this means that he offered to give himself as a sacrifice *instead of*

them, it would show reason enough why he could not be glorified with the vision of the Redeemer. For so he would think to appease God, not seeing that God was as tender as himself, not seeing that God is the Reconciler, the Redeemer, not seeing that the sacrifice of the heart is the atonement for which alone he cares. He would be blotted out, that their names might be kept in. Certainly when God told him that he that had sinned should suffer for it, Moses could not see that this was the kindest thing that God could do. But I doubt if that was what Moses meant. It seems rather the utterance of a divine despair:—he would not survive the children of his people. He did not care for a love that would save him alone, and send to the dust those thousands of calf-worshipping brothers and sisters. But in either case, how much could Moses have understood, if he had seen the face instead of the back of that form that passed the clift of the rock amidst the thunderous vapours of Sinai? Had that form turned and that face looked upon him, the face

of him who was more man than any man; the face through which the divine emotion would, in the ages to come, manifest itself to the eyes of men, bowed, it might well be, at such a moment, in anticipation of the crown with which the children of the people for whom Moses pleaded with his life, would one day crown him; the face of him who was bearing and was yet to bear their griefs and carry their sorrows, who is now bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows; the face of the Son of God, who, instead of accepting the sacrifice of one of his creatures to satisfy his justice or support his dignity, gave himself utterly unto them, and therein to the Father by doing his lovely will; who suffered unto the death, not that men might not suffer, but that their suffering might be like his, and lead them up to his perfection; if that face, I say, had turned and looked upon Moses, would Moses have lived? Would he not have died, not of splendour, not of sorrow, (terror was not there,) but of the actual sight of the incomprehensible? If infinite mystery had

not slain him, would he not have gone about dazed, doing nothing, having no more any business that he could do in the world, seeing God was to him altogether unknown? For thus a full revelation would not only be no revelation, but the destruction of all revelation.

"May it not then hurt to say that God is Love, all love, and nothing other than love? It is not enough to answer that such is the truth, even granted that it is. Upon your own showing, too much revelation may hurt by dazzling and blinding."

There is a great difference between a mystery of God that no man understands, and a mystery of God laid hold of, let it be but by one single man. The latter is already a revelation; and, passing through that man's mind, will be so presented, it may be so *feebly* presented, that it will not hurt his fellows. Let God conceal as he will: (although I believe he is ever destroying concealment, ever giving all that he can, all that men can receive at his hands, that he does

not want to conceal anything, but to reveal everything,) the light which any man has received is not to be put under a bushel; it is for him and his fellows. In sowing the seed he will not withhold his hand because there are thorns and stony places and waysides. He will think that in some cases even a bird of the air may carry the matter, that the good seed may be too much for the thorns, that that which withers away upon the stony place may yet leave there, by its own decay, a deeper soil for the next seed to root itself in. Besides, they only can receive the doctrine who have ears to hear. If the selfish man could believe it, he would misinterpret it; but he cannot believe it. It is not possible that he should. But the loving soul, oppressed by wrong teaching, or partial truth claiming to be the whole, will hear, understand, rejoice.

For, when we say that God is Love, do we teach men that their fear of him is groundless? No. As much as they fear will come upon them, possibly far

more. But there is something beyond their fear,—a divine fate which they cannot withstand, because it works along with the human individuality which the divine individuality has created in them. The wrath will consume what they *call* themselves; so that the selves God made shall appear, coming out with tenfold consciousness of being, and bringing with them all that made the blessedness of the life the men tried to lead without God. They will know that now first are they fully themselves. The avaricious, weary, selfish, suspicious old man shall have passed away. The young, ever young self, will remain. That which they *thought* themselves shall have vanished: that which they *felt* themselves, though they misjudged their own feelings, shall remain—remain glorified in repentant hope. For that which cannot be shaken shall remain. That which is immortal in God shall remain in man. The death that is in them shall be consumed.

It is the law of Nature—that is, the law of God—

that all that is destructible shall be destroyed. When that which is immortal buries itself in the destructible —when it receives all the messages from without, through the surrounding region of decadence, and none from within, from the eternal doors—it cannot, though immortal still, know its own immortality. The destructible must be burned out of it, or begin to be burned out of it, before it can *partake* of eternal life. When that is all burnt away and gone, then it has eternal life. Or rather, when the fire of eternal life has possessed a man, then the destructible is gone utterly, and he is pure. Many a man's work must be burned, that by that very burning he may be saved—"so as by fire." Away in smoke go the lordships, the Rabbihoods of the world, and the man who acquiesces in the burning is saved by the fire; for it has destroyed the destructible, which is the vantage point of the deathly, which would destroy both body and soul in hell. If still he cling to that which can be burned, the burning goes on deeper and deeper into his bosom,

till it reaches the roots of the falsehood that enslaves him—possibly by looking like the truth.

The man who loves God, and is not yet pure, courts the burning of God. Nor is it always torture. The fire shows itself sometimes only as light—still it will be fire of purifying. The consuming fire is just the original, the active form of Purity,—that which makes pure, that which is indeed Love, the creative energy of God. Without purity there can be as no creation so no persistence. That which is not pure is corruptible, and corruption cannot inherit incorruption.

The man whose deeds are evil, fears the burning. But the burning will not come the less that he fears it or denies it. Escape is hopeless. For Love is inexorable. Our God is a consuming fire. He shall not come out till he has paid the uttermost farthing.

If the man resists the burning of God, the consuming fire of Love, a terrible doom awaits him, and its day will come. He shall be cast into the outer darkness

who hates the fire of God. What sick dismay shall then seize upon him! For let a man think and care ever so little about God, he does not therefore exist without God. God is here with him, upholding, warming, delighting, teaching him—making life a good thing to him. God gives him himself, though he knows it not. But when God withdraws from a man as far as that can be without the man's ceasing to be; when the man feels himself abandoned, hanging in a ceaseless vertigo of existence upon the verge of the gulf of his being, without support, without refuge, without aim, without end—for the soul has no weapons wherewith to destroy herself—with no inbreathing of joy, with nothing to make life good;—then will he listen in agony for the faintest sound of life from the closed door; then, if the moan of suffering humanity ever reaches the ear of the outcast of darkness, he will be ready to rush into the very heart of the Consuming Fire to know life once more, to change this terror of sick negation, of unspeakable death, for that region of painful hope. Imagination cannot mislead us

into too much horror of being without God—that one living death. Is not this

> to be worse than worst
> Of those that lawless and incertain thoughts
> Imagine howling?

But with this divine difference: that the outer darkness is but the most dreadful form of the consuming fire—the fire without light—the darkness visible, the black flame. God hath withdrawn himself, but not lost his hold. His face is turned away, but his hand is laid upon him still. His heart has ceased to beat into the man's heart, but he keeps him alive by his fire. And that fire will go searching and burning on in him, as in the highest saint who is not yet pure as he is pure.

But at length, O God, wilt thou not cast Death and Hell into the lake of Fire—even into thine own consuming self? Death shall then die everlastingly,

> And Hell itself will pass away,
> And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

Then indeed wilt thou be all in all. For then our poor brothers and sisters, every one—O God, we trust in

thee, the Consuming Fire—shall have been burnt clean and brought home. For if their moans, myriads of ages away, would turn heaven for us into hell—shall a man be more merciful than God? Shall, of all his glories, his mercy alone not be infinite? Shall a brother love a brother more than The Father loves a son?—more than The Brother Christ loves his brother? Would he not die yet again to save one brother more?

As for us, now will we come to thee, our Consuming Fire. And thou wilt not burn us more than we can bear. But thou wilt burn us. And although thou seem to slay us, yet will we trust in thee even for that which thou hast not spoken, if by any means at length we may attain unto the blessedness of those *who have not seen and yet have believed.*

THE HIGHER FAITH.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.—JOHN XX. 29.

THE aspiring child is often checked by the dull disciple who has learned his lessons so imperfectly that he has never got beyond his school-books. Full of fragmentary rules, he has perceived the principle of none of them. The child draws near to him with some outburst of unusual feeling, some scintillation of a lively hope, some wide-reaching imagination that draws into the circle of religious theory the world of nature, and the yet wider world of humanity, for to the child the doings of the Father fill the spaces; he has not yet learned to divide between God and nature, between Providence and grace, between love and benevolence;—

the child comes, I say, with his heart full, and the answer he receives from the dull disciple is—"God has said nothing about that in his word, therefore we have no right to believe anything about it. It is better not to speculate on such matters. However desirable it may seem to us, we have nothing to do with it. It is not revealed." For such a man is incapable of suspecting, that what has remained hidden from him may have been revealed to the babe. With the authority, therefore, of years and ignorance, he forbids the child, for he believes in no revelation but the Bible, and in the word of that alone. For him all revelation has ceased with and been buried in the Bible, to be with difficulty exhumed, and, with much questioning of the decayed form, re-united into a rigid skeleton of metaphysical and legal contrivance for letting the love of God have its way unchecked by the other perfections of his being.

But to the man who would live throughout the whole divine form of his being, not confining himself to one

broken corner of his kingdom, and leaving the rest to the demons that haunt such deserts, a thousand questions will arise to which the Bible does not even allude. Has he indeed nothing to do with such? Do they lie beyond the sphere of his responsibility? "Leave them," says the dull disciple. "I cannot," returns the man. "Not only does that degree of peace of mind without which action is impossible, depend upon the answers to these questions, but my conduct itself must correspond to these answers." "Leave them at least till God chooses to explain, if he ever will." "No. Questions imply answers. He has put the questions in my heart; he holds the answers in his. I will seek them from him. I will wait, but not till I have knocked. I will be patient, but not till I have asked. I will seek until I find. He has something for me. My prayer shall go up unto the God of my life."

Sad, indeed, would the whole matter be, if the Bible had told us *everything* God meant us to believe. But herein is the Bible itself greatly wronged. It nowhere

lays claim to be regarded us *the* Word, *the* Way, *the* Truth. The Bible leads us to Jesus, the inexhaustible, the ever-unfolding Revelation of God. It is Christ "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," not the Bible, save as leading to him. And why are we told that these treasures are *hid* in him who is the *Revelation* of God? Is it that we should despair of finding them and cease to seek them? Are they not hid in him that they may be revealed to us in due time—that is, when we are in need of them? Is not their hiding in him the mediatorial step towards their unfolding in us? Is he not the Truth?—the Truth to men? Is he not the High Priest of his brethren, to answer all the troubled questionings that arise in their dim humanity? For it is his heart which

Contains of good, wise, just, the perfect shape.

Didymus answers, "No doubt, what we know not now, we shall know hereafter." Certainly there may be things which the mere passing into another stage of existence will illuminate; but the questions that come

here, must be inquired into here, and if not answered here, then there too until they be answered. There is more hid in Christ than we shall ever learn, here or there either; but they that begin first to inquire will soonest be gladdened with revelation; and with them he will be best pleased, for the slowness of his disciples troubled him of old. To say that we must wait for the other world, to know the mind of him who came to this world to give himself to us, seems to me the foolishness of a worldly and lazy spirit. The Son of God *is* the Teacher of men, giving to them of his Spirit—that Spirit which manifests the deep things of God, being to a man the mind of Christ. The great heresy of the Church of the present day is unbelief in this Spirit. The mass of the Church does not believe that the Spirit has a revelation for every man individually—a revelation as different from the revelation of the Bible, as the food in the moment of passing into living brain and nerve differs from the bread and meat. If we were once filled with the mind of Christ, we should know that the Bible had

done its work, was fulfilled, and had for us passed away, that thereby the Word of our God might abide for ever. The one use of the Bible is to make us look at Jesus, that through him we might know his Father and our Father, his God and our God. Till we thus know Him, let us hold the Bible dear as the moon of our darkness, by which we travel towards the east; not dear as the sun whence her light cometh, and towards which we haste, that, walking in the sun himself, we may no more need the mirror that reflected his absent brightness.

But this doctrine of the Spirit is not my end now, although, were it not true, all our religion would be vain, that of St Paul and that of Socrates. What I want to say and show, if I may, is, that a man will please God better by believing some things that are not told him, than by confining his faith to those things that are expressly said—said to arouse in us the truth-seeing faculty, the spiritual desire, the prayer for the good things which God will give to them that ask him.

"But is not this dangerous doctrine? Will not a man be taught thus to believe the things he likes best, even to pray for that which he likes best? And will he not grow arrogant in his confidence?"

If it be true that the Spirit strives with our spirit; if it be true that God teaches men, we may safely leave those dreaded results to him. If the man is of the Lord's company, he is safer with him than with those who would secure their safety by hanging on the outskirts and daring nothing. If he is not taught of God in that which he hopes for, God will let him know it. He will receive something else than he prays for. If he can pray to God for anything not good, the answer will come in the flames of that consuming fire. These will soon bring him to some of his spiritual senses. But it will be far better for him to be thus sharply tutored, than to go on a snail's pace in the journey of the spiritual life. And for arrogance, I have seen nothing breed it faster or in more offensive forms than the worship of the letter.

And to whom shall a man, whom the blessed God has made, look for what he likes best, but to that blessed God? If we have been indeed enabled to see that God is our Father, as the Lord taught us, let us advance from that truth to understand that he is far more than father—that his nearness to us is beyond the embodiment of the highest idea of father; that the fatherhood of God is but a step towards the Godhood for them that can receive it. What a man likes best *may* be God's will, may be the voice of the Spirit striving *with* his spirit, not against it; and if, as I have said, it be not so—if the thing he asks is not according to his will—there is that consuming fire. The danger lies, not in asking from God what is not good, nor even in hoping to receive it from him, but in not asking him, in not having him of our council. Nor will the fact that we dare not inquire his will, preserve us from the necessity of acting in some such matter as we call unrevealed, and where shall we find ourselves then? Nor, once more,

for such a disposition of mind is it likely that the book itself will contain much of a revelation.

The whole matter may safely be left to God.

But I doubt if a man *can* ask anything from God that is bad. Surely one who has begun to pray to him is child enough to know the bad from the good when it has come so near him, and dares not pray for *that*. If you refer me to David praying such fearful prayers against his enemies, I answer, you must read them by your knowledge of the man himself and his history. Remember that this is he who, with the burning heart of an eastern, yet, when his greatest enemy was given into his hands, instead of taking the vengeance of an eastern, contented himself with cutting off the skirt of his garment. It was justice and right that he craved in his soul, although his prayers took a wild form of words. God heard him, and gave him what contented him. In a good man at least, "revenge is," as Lord Bacon says, "a kind of wild justice," and is easily satisfied. The heart's

desire upon such a one's enemies is best met and granted when the hate is changed into love and compassion.

But it is about hopes rather than prayers that I wish to write.

What should I think of my child, if I found that he limited his faith in me and hope from me to the few promises he had heard me utter! The faith that limits itself to the promises of God, seems to me to partake of the paltry character of such a faith in my child—good enough for a Pagan, but for a Christian a miserable and wretched faith. Those who rest in such a faith would feel yet more comfortable if they had God's bond instead of his word, which they regard not as the outcome of his character, but as a pledge of his honour. They try to believe in the truth of his word, but the truth of his Being, they understand not. In his oath they persuade themselves that they put confidence: in *himself* they do not believe, for they know him not. Therefore it is little wonder that they distrust those swellings of the heart which are his drawings of the man

towards him, as sun and moon heave the ocean mass heavenward. Brother, sister, if such is your faith, you will not, must not stop there. You must come out of this bondage of the law to which you give the name of grace, for there is little that is gracious in it. You will yet know the dignity of your high calling, and the love of God that passeth knowledge. He is not afraid of your presumptuous approach to him. It is you who are afraid to come near him. He is not watching over his dignity. It is you who fear to be sent away as the disciples would have sent away the little children. It is you who think so much about your souls and are so afraid of losing your life, that you dare not draw near to the Life of life, lest it should consume you.

Our God, we will trust thee. Shall we not find thee equal to our faith? One day, we shall laugh ourselves to scorn that we looked for so little from thee; for thy giving will not be limited by our hoping.

O thou of little faith! "in everything,"—I am quoting your own Bible; nay, more, I am quoting a divine soul

that knew his master Christ, and in his strength opposed apostles, not to say christians, to their faces, because they could not believe more than a little in God; could believe only for themselves and not for their fellows; could believe for the few of the chosen nation, for whom they had God's ancient *word*, but could not believe for the multitude of the nations, for the millions of hearts that God had made to search after him and find him;—"In everything," says St Paul, "In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." For this *everything*, nothing is too small. That it should trouble us is enough. There is some principle involved in it worth the notice even of God himself, for did he not make us so that the thing does trouble us? And surely for this *everything*, nothing can be too great. When the Son of man cometh and findeth too much faith on the earth—may God in his mercy slay us. Meantime, we will hope and trust.

Do you count it a great faith to believe what God has

said? It seems to me, I repeat, a little faith, and, if alone, worthy of reproach. To believe what he has not said is faith indeed, and blessed. For that comes of believing in HIM. Can you not believe in God himself? Or, confess,—do you not find it so hard to believe what he has said, that even that is almost more than you can do? If I ask you why, will not the true answer be—"Because we are not quite sure that he did say it"?. If you believed in God you would find it easy to believe the word. You would not even need to inquire whether he had *said* it: you would know that he meant it.

Let us then dare something. Let us not always be unbelieving children. Let us keep in mind that the Lord, not forbidding those who insist on seeing before they will believe, blesses those who have not seen and yet have believed—those who trust in him more than that—who believe without the sight of the eyes, without the hearing of the ears. They are blessed to whom a wonder is not a fable, to whom a mystery is not a

mockery, to whom a glory is not an unreality—who are content to ask, "Is it like Him?" It is a dull-hearted, unchildlike people that will be always putting God in mind of his promises. Those promises are good to reveal what God is; if they think them good as binding God, let them have it so for the hardness of their hearts. They prefer the Word to the Spirit: it is theirs.

Even such will leave us—some of them will, if not all—to the "uncovenanted mercies of God." We desire no less; we hope for no better. Those are the mercies beyond our height, beyond our depth, beyond our reach. We know in whom we have believed, and we look for that which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. Shall God's thoughts be surpassed by man's thoughts? God's giving by man's asking? God's creation by man's imagination? No. Let us climb to the height of our Alpine desires; let us leave them behind us and ascend the spear-pointed Himmalays of our aspirations; still shall we find the depth of God's sapphire above us; still shall we find the

heavens higher than the earth, and his thoughts and his ways higher than our thoughts and our ways.

Ah Lord! be thou in all our being; as not in the Sundays of our time alone, so not in the chambers of our hearts alone. We dare not think that thou canst not, carest not; that some things are not for thy beholding, some questions not to be asked of thee. For are we not all thine—utterly thine? That which a man speaks not to his fellow, we speak to thee. Our very passions we hold up to thee, and say, "Behold, Lord! Think about us; for thus thou hast made us." We would not escape from our history by fleeing into the wilderness, by hiding our heads in the sands of forgetfulness, or the repentance that comes of pain, or the lethargy of hopelessness. We take it, as our very life, in our hand, and flee with it unto thee. Triumphant is the answer which thou holdest for every doubt. It may be we could not understand it yet, even if thou didst speak it "with most miraculous organ." But thou shalt at least find faith in the earth, O Lord, if

thou comest to look for it now—the faith of ignorant but hoping children, who know that they do not know, and believe that thou knowest.

And for our brothers and sisters, who cleave to what they call thy word, thinking to please thee so, they are in thy holy safe hands, who hast taught us that *whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him;* though *unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.*

IT SHALL NOT BE FORGIVEN.

And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.—LUKE xi. 18.

WHATEVER belonging to the region of thought and feeling is uttered in words, is of necessity uttered imperfectly. For thought and feeling are infinite, and human speech, although far-reaching in scope, and marvellous in delicacy, can embody them after all but approximately and suggestively. Spirit and Truth are like the Lady Una and the Red Cross Knight; Speech like the dwarf that lags behind with the lady's "bag of needments."

Our Lord had no design of constructing a system of truth in intellectual forms. The truth of the moment in

its relation to him, The Truth, was what he spoke. He spoke out of a region of realities which he knew could only be suggested—not represented—in the forms of intellect and speech. With vivid flashes of life and truth his words invade our darkness, rousing us with sharp stings of light to will our awaking, to arise from the dead and cry for the light which he can give, not in the lightning of words only, but in indwelling presence and power.

How, then, must the truth fare with those who, having neither glow nor insight, will build intellectual systems upon the words of our Lord, or of his disciples? A little child would better understand Plato than they St Paul. The meaning in those great hearts who knew our Lord is too great to enter theirs. The sense they find in the words must be a sense small enough to pass through their narrow doors. And if mere words, without the interpreting sympathy, may mean, as they may, almost anything the receiver will or can attribute to them, how shall the man, bent at best on

the salvation of his own soul, understand, for instance, the meaning of that apostle who was ready to encounter banishment itself from the presence of Christ, that the beloved brethren of his nation might enter in? To men who are not simple, simple words are the most inexplicable of riddles.

If we are bound to search after what our Lord means —and he speaks that we may understand—we are at least equally bound to refuse any interpretation which seems to us unlike him, unworthy of him. He himself says, "Why do ye not of your own selves judge what is right?" In thus refusing, it may happen that, from ignorance or misunderstanding, we refuse the verbal form of its true interpretation, but we cannot thus refuse the spirit and the truth of it, for those we could not have seen without being in the condition to recognize them as the mind of Christ. Some misapprehension, I say, some obliquity, or some slavish adherence to old prejudices, may thus cause us to refuse the true interpretation, but we are none the less bound to refuse and

wait for more light. To accept that as the will of our Lord which to us is inconsistent with what we have learned to worship in him already, is to introduce discord into that harmony whose end is to unite our hearts, and make them whole.

"Is it for us," says the objector who, by some sleight of will, believes in the word apart from the meaning for which it stands, "to judge of the character of our Lord?" I answer, "This very thing he requires of us." He requires of us that we should do him no injustice. He would come and dwell with us, if we would but open our chambers to receive him. How shall we receive him if, avoiding judgment, we hold this or that daub of authority or tradition hanging upon our walls to be the real likeness of our Lord? Is it not possible at least that, judging unrighteous judgment by such while we flatter ourselves that we are refusing to judge, we may close our doors against the Master himself as an impostor, not finding him like the picture that hangs

in our oratory. And if we do not judge—humbly and lovingly—who is to judge for us? Better to refuse even the truth for a time, than, by accepting into our intellectual creed that which our heart cannot receive, not seeing its real form, to introduce hesitation into our prayers, a jar into our praises, and a misery into our love. If it be the truth, we shall one day see it another thing than it appears now, and love it because we see it lovely; for *all* truth is lovely. "Not to the unregenerate mind." But at least, I answer, to the mind which can love that Man, Christ Jesus; and that part of us which loves him let us follow, and in its judgments let us trust; hoping, beyond all things else, for its growth and enlightenment by the Lord, who is that Spirit. Better, I say again, to refuse the right *form*, than, by accepting it in misapprehension of what it really is, to refuse the spirit, the truth that dwells therein. Which of these, I pray, is liker to the sin against the Holy Ghost? To mistake the meaning of the Son of man

may well fill a man with sadness. But to care so little for him as to receive as his what the noblest part of our nature rejects as low and poor, or selfish and wrong, that surely is more like the sin against the Holy Ghost that can never be forgiven; for it is a sin against the truth itself, not the embodiment of it in him.

Words for their full meaning depend upon their source, the person who speaks them. An utterance may even seem commonplace, till you are told that thus spoke one whom you know to be always thinking, always feeling, always acting. Recognizing the mind whence the words proceed, you know the scale by which they are to be understood. So the words of God cannot mean just the same as the words of man. "Can we not, then, understand them?" Yes, we can understand them—we can understand them *more* than the words of men. Whatever a good word means, as used by a good man, it means just infinitely more as used by God. And the feeling or

thought expressed by that word takes higher and higher forms in us as we become capable of understanding him,—that is, as we become like him.

I am far less anxious to show what the sin against the Holy Ghost means, than to show what the non-forgiveness means; though I think we may arrive at some understanding of both. I cannot admit for a moment that there is anything in the Bible too mysterious to be looked into; for the Bible is a *revelation*, an unveiling. True, into many things uttered there I can see only a little way. But that little way is the way of life; for the depth of their mystery is God. And even setting aside the duty of the matter, and seeking for justification as if the duty were doubtful, it is reason enough for inquiring into such passages as this before me, that they are often torture to human minds, chiefly those of holy women and children. I knew a child who believed she had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, because she had, in her toilette, made an improper use of

a pin. Dare not to rebuke me for adducing the diseased fancy of a child in a weighty matter of theology. "Despise not one of these little ones." Would the theologians were as near the truth in such matters as the children. *Diseased fancy!* The child knew, *and was conscious that she knew*, that she was doing wrong because she had been forbidden. *There was rational ground for her fear.* How would Jesus have received the confession of the darling? *He* would not have told her she was silly, and "never to mind." Child as she was, might he not have said to her, "I do not condemn thee: go and sin no more"?

To reach the first position necessary for the final attainment of our end, I will inquire what the divine forgiveness means. And in order to arrive at this naturally, I will begin by asking what the human forgiveness means; for, if there be any meaning in the Incarnation, it is through the Human that we must climb up to the Divine.

I do not know that it is of much use to go back to the Greek or the English word for any primary idea of the act — the one meaning *a sending away*, the other, *a giving away*. It will be enough if we look at the feelings associated with the exercise of what is called *forgiveness*.

A man will say: "I forgive, but I cannot forget. Let the fellow never come in my sight again." To what does such a forgiveness reach? To the remission or sending away of the penalties which the wronged believes he can claim from the wrong-doer. *But there is no sending away of the wrong itself from between them.*

Again, a man will say: "He has done a very mean action, but he has the worst of it himself in that he is capable of doing so. I despise him too much to desire revenge. I will take no notice of it. I forgive him. I don't care."

Here, again, there is no sending away of the wrong from between them—no *remission* of the sin.

A third will say: "I suppose I must forgive him; for if I do not forgive him, God will not forgive me."

This man is *a little* nearer the truth, inasmuch as a ground of sympathy, though only that of common sin, is recognized as between the offender and himself.

One more will say: "He has wronged me grievously. It is a dreadful thing to me, and more dreadful still to him, that he should have done it. He has hurt me, but he has nearly killed himself. He shall have no more injury from it that I can save him. I cannot feel the same towards him yet; but I will try to make him acknowledge the wrong he has done me, and so put it away from him. Then, perhaps, I shall be able to feel towards him as I used to feel. For this end I will show him all the kindness I can, not forcing it upon him, but seizing every fit opportunity; not, I hope, from a wish to make myself great through bounty to him, but because I love him so much that I want to love him more in reconciling him to his true self. I would destroy this evil deed

that has come between us. I send it away. And I would have him destroy it from between us too, by abjuring it utterly."

Which comes nearest to the divine idea of forgiveness? nearest, though with the gulf between, wherewith the heavens are higher than the earth?

For the Divine creates the Human, has the creative power in excess of the Human. It is the Divine forgiveness that, originating itself, creates our forgiveness, and therefore can do so much more. It can take up all our wrongs, small and great, with their righteous attendance of griefs and sorrows, and carry them away from between our God and us.

Christ is God's Forgiveness.

Before we approach a little nearer to this great sight, let us consider the human forgiveness in a more definite embodiment—as between a father and a son. For although God is so much more to us, and comes so much nearer to us than a father can be or come, yet the fatherhood is the last height of

the human stair whence our understandings can see him afar off, and where our hearts can first know that he is nigh, even in them.

There are various kinds and degrees of wrong-doing, which need varying kinds and degrees of forgiveness. An outburst of anger in a child, for instance, scarcely wants forgiveness. The wrong in it may be so small, that the parent has only to influence the child for self-restraint, and the rousing of the will against the wrong. The father will not feel that such a fault has built up any wall between him and his child. But suppose that he discovered in him a habit of sly cruelty towards his younger brothers, or the animals of the house, how differently would he feel! Could his forgiveness be the same as in the former case? Would not the different evil require a different *form* of forgiveness? I mean, would not the forgiveness have to take the form of that kind of punishment fittest for restraining, in the hope of finally rooting out, the wickedness? Could there be

true love in any other kind of forgiveness than this? A passing-by of the offence might spring from a poor human kindness, but never from divine love. It would not be *remission*. Forgiveness can never be indifference. Forgiveness is love towards the unlovely.

Let us look a little closer at the way a father might feel, and express his feelings. One child, the moment the fault was committed, the father would clasp to his bosom, knowing that very love in its own natural manifestation would destroy the fault in him, and that, the next moment, he would be weeping. The father's hatred of the sin would burst forth in his pitiful tenderness towards the child who was so wretched as to have done the sin, and so destroy it. The fault of such a child would then cause no interruption of the interchange of sweet affections. The child is forgiven at once. But the treatment of another upon the same principle would be altogether different. If he had been guilty of baseness, meanness, selfish-

ness, deceit, self-gratulation in the evil brought upon others, the father might *say* to himself: "I cannot forgive him. This is beyond forgiveness." He might *say* so, and keep saying so, while all the time he was striving to let forgiveness find its way that it might lift him from the gulf into which he had fallen. His love might grow yet greater because of the wandering and loss of his son. For love is divine, and then most divine when it loves according to *needs* and not according to *merits*. But the forgiveness would be but in the process of making, as it were, or of drawing nigh to the sinner. Not till his opening heart received the divine flood of destroying affection, and his own affection burst forth to meet it and sweep the evil away, could it be said to be finished, to have arrived, could the son be said to *be* forgiven.

God is forgiving us every day—sending from between him and us our sins and their fogs and darkness. Witness the shining of his sun and the falling of his rain, the filling of their hearts with food and gladness,

that he loves them that love him not. When some sin that we have committed has clouded all our horizon, and hidden him from our eyes, he, forgiving us, ere we are, and that we may be, forgiven, sweeps away a path for this his forgiveness to reach our hearts, that it may by causing our repentance destroy the wrong, and make us able even to forgive ourselves. For some are too proud to forgive themselves, till the forgiveness of God has had its way with them, has drowned their pride in the tears of repentance, and made their heart come again like the heart of a little child.

But, looking upon forgiveness, then, as the perfecting of a work ever going on, as the contact of God's heart and ours, in spite and in destruction of the intervening wrong, we may say that God's love is ever in front of his forgiveness. God's love is the prime mover, ever seeking to perfect his forgiveness, which latter needs the human condition for its consummation. The love is perfect, working out the

forgiveness. God loves where he cannot yet forgive—where forgiveness in the full sense is as yet simply impossible, because no contact of hearts is possible, because that which lies between has not even begun to yield to the besom of his holy destruction.

Some things, then, between the Father and his children, as between a father and his child, may comparatively, and in a sense, be made light of—I do not mean made light of in themselves: away they must go—inasmuch as, evils or sins though they be, they yet leave room for the dwelling of God's Spirit in the heart, forgiving and cleansing away the evil. When a man's evil is thus fading out of him, and he is growing better and better, that is the forgiveness coming into him more and more. Perfect in God's will, it is having its perfect work in the mind of the man. When the man hath, with his whole nature, cast away his sin, there is no room for forgiveness any more, for God dwells in him, and he in God. With the voice of Nathan, "Thou art the man," the forgiveness of God laid hold of David,

the heart of the king was humbled to the dust; and when he thus awoke from the moral lethargy that had fallen upon him, he found that he was still with God. "When I awake," he said, "I am still with thee."

But there are two sins, not of individual deed, but of spiritual condition, which *cannot be forgiven;* that is, as it seems to me, which cannot be excused, passed by, made little of by the tenderness even of God, inasmuch as they will allow no forgiveness to come into the soul, they will permit no good influence to go on working alongside of them; they shut God out altogether. Therefore the man guilty of these can never receive into himself the holy renewing saving influences of God's forgiveness. God is outside of him in every sense, save that which springs from his creating relation to him, by which, thanks be to God, he yet keeps a hold of him, although against the will of the man who will not be forgiven. The one of these sins is against man; the other against God.

The former is unforgivingness to our neighbour; the

shutting of him out from our mercies, from our love—so from the universe, as far as we are a portion of it—the murdering therefore of our neighbour. It may be an infinitely less evil to murder a man than to refuse to forgive him. The former may be the act of a moment of passion: the latter is the heart's choice. It is *spiritual* murder, the worst, to hate, to brood over the feeling that excludes, that, in our microcosm, kills the image, the idea of the hated. We listen to the voice of our own hurt pride or hurt affection (only the latter without the suggestion of the former, thinketh no evil) to the injury of the evil-doer. In as far as we can, we quench the relations of life between us; we close up the passages of possible return. This is to shut out God, the Life, the One. For how are we to receive the forgiving presence while we shut out our brother from our portion of the universal forgiveness, the final restoration, thus refusing to let God be All in all? If God appeared to us, how could he say, "I forgive you," while we remained unforgiving to our neighbour? Suppose it

possible that he should say so, his forgiveness would be no good to us while we were uncured of our unforgivingness. It would not touch us. It would not come near us. Nay, it would hurt us, for we should think ourselves safe and well, while the horror of disease was eating the heart out of us. Tenfold the forgiveness lies in the words, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." Those words are kindness indeed. God holds the unforgiving man with his hand, but turns his face away from him. If, in his desire to see the face of his Father, he turns his own towards his brother, then the face of God turns round and seeks his, for then the man may look upon God and not die. With our forgiveness to our neighbour, in flows the consciousness of God's forgiveness to us; or even with the effort, we become capable of believing that God can forgive us. No man who will not forgive his neighbour, can believe that God is willing, yea, wanting to forgive him, can believe that the dove of God's peace is hovering over a chaotic

heart, fain to alight, but finding no rest for the sole of its foot. For God to say to such a man, "I cannot forgive you," is love as well as necessity. If God said, "I forgive you," to a man who hated his brother, and if (as is impossible) that voice of forgiveness should reach the man, what would it mean to him? How would the man interpret it? Would it not mean to him, "You may go on hating. I do not mind it. You have had great provocation, and are justified in your hate"? No doubt God takes what wrong there is, and what provocation there is, into the account; but the more provocation, the more excuse that can be urged for the hate, the more reason, if possible, that the hater should be delivered from the hell of his hate, that God's child should be made the loving child that he meant him to be. The man would think, not that God loved the sinner, but that he forgave the sin, which God never does. *Every* sin meets with its due fate—inexorable expulsion from the paradise of God's Humanity. He loves the sinner so much that he cannot forgive

him in any other way than by banishing from his bosom the demon that possesses him, by lifting him out of that mire of his iniquity.

No one, however, supposes for a moment that a man who has once refused to forgive his brother, shall therefore be condemned to endless unforgiveness and unforgivingness. What is meant is, that while a man continues in such a mood, God cannot be with him as his friend; not that he will not be his friend, but the friendship being all on one side—that of God—must take forms such as the man will not be able to recognize as friendship. Forgiveness, as I have said, is not love merely, but love *conveyed as love* to the erring, so establishing peace towards God, and forgiveness towards our neighbour.

To return then to our immediate text: Is the refusal of forgiveness contained in it a condemnation to irrecoverable impenitence? Strange righteousness would be the decree, that because a man has done wrong—let us say has done wrong so often and so

much that he *is* wrong — he shall for ever remain wrong! Do not tell me the condemnation is only negative—a leaving of the man to the consequences of his own will, or at most a withdrawing from him of the Spirit which he has despised. God will not take shelter behind such a jugglery of logic or metaphysics. He is neither schoolman nor theologian, but our Father in heaven. He knows that that in him would be the same unforgivingness for which he refuses to forgive man. The only tenable ground for supporting such a doctrine is, that God *cannot* do more; that Satan has overcome; and that Jesus, amongst his own brothers and sisters in the image of God, has been less strong than the adversary, the destroyer. What then shall I say of such a doctrine of devils as that, even if a man did repent, God would not or could not forgive him?

Let us look at "*the* unpardonable sin," as this mystery is commonly called, and see what we can find to understand about it.

All sin is unpardonable. There is no compromise to be made with it. We shall not come out except clean, except having paid the uttermost farthing. But the special unpardonableness of those sins, the one of which I have spoken and that which we are now considering, lies in their shutting out God from his *genial*, his especially spiritual, influences upon the man. Possibly in the case of the former sin, I may have said this too strongly; possibly the love of God may have some part even in the man who will not forgive his brother, although, if he continues unforgiving, that part must decrease and die away; possibly resentment against our brother, might yet for a time leave room for some divine influences by its side, although either the one or the other must speedily yield; but the man who denies truth, who consciously resists duty, who says there is no truth, or that the truth he sees is not true, who says that which is good is of Satan, or that which is bad is of God, supposing him to know that it is good or is bad, denies the Spirit, shuts out

the Spirit, and therefore cannot be forgiven. For without the Spirit no forgiveness can enter the man to cast out the satan. Without the Spirit to witness with his spirit, no man could know himself forgiven, even if God appeared to him and said so. The full forgiveness is, as I have said, when a man feels that God is forgiving him; and this cannot be while he opposes himself to the very essence of God's will.

As far as we can see, the men of whom this was spoken were men who resisted the truth with some amount of perception that it was the truth; men neither led astray by passion, nor altogether blinded by their abounding prejudice; men who were not excited to condemn one form of truth by the love which they bore to another form of it; but men so set, from selfishness and love of influence, against one whom they saw to be a good man, that they denied the goodness of what they knew to be good, in order to put down the man whom they knew to be good, because He had spoken against them, and was

ruining their influence and authority with the people by declaring them to be no better than they knew themselves to be. Is not this to be Satan? to be in hell? to be corruption? to be that which is damned? Was not this their *condition* unpardonable? How, through all this mass of falsehood, could the pardon of God reach the essential humanity within it? Crying as it was for God's forgiveness, these men had almost separated their humanity from themselves, had taken their part with the powers of darkness. Forgiveness while they were such was an impossibility No. Out of that they must come, else there was no word of God for them. But the very word that told them of the unpardonable state in which they were, was just the one form the voice of mercy could take in calling on them to repent. They must hear and be afraid. I dare not, cannot think that they refused the truth, knowing all that it was; but I think they refused the truth, knowing that it was true—not carried away, as I have said, by wild passion, but by cold

self-love, and envy, and avarice, and ambition; not merely doing wrong knowingly, but setting their whole natures knowingly against the light. Of this nature must the sin against the Holy Ghost surely be. "This is the condemnation," (not the sins that men have committed, but the condition of mind in which they choose to remain,) "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." In this sin against the Holy Ghost, I see no single act alone, although it must find expression in many acts, but a wilful condition of mind,

> As far removed from God and light of heaven,
> As from the centre thrice to the utmost pole.

For this there could be no such excuse made as that even a little light might work beside it; for there light could find no entrance and no room; light was just what such a mind was set against, almost because it was what it was. The condition was utterly bad.

But can a man really fall into such a condition of spiritual depravity?

That is my chief difficulty. But I think it may be. And wiser people than I, have thought so. I have difficulty in believing it, I say; yet I think it must be so. But I do not believe that it is a fixed, a final condition. I do not see why it should be such any more than that of the man who does not forgive his neighbour. If you say it is a worse offence, I say, Is it too bad for the forgiveness of God?

But is God able to do anything more with the man? Or how is the man ever to get out of this condition? If the Spirit of God is shut out from his heart, how is he to become better?

The Spirit of God is the Spirit whose influence is known by its witnessing with our spirit. But may there not be other powers and means of the Spirit preparatory to this its highest office with man? God who has made us can never be far from any man who draws the breath of life—nay, must be in him; not

necessarily in his heart, as we say, but still in him. May not then one day some terrible convulsion from the centre of his being, some fearful earthquake from the hidden gulfs of his nature, shake such a man so that through all the deafness of his death, the voice of the Spirit may be faintly heard, the still small voice that comes after the tempest and the earthquake? May there not be a fire that even such can feel? Who shall set bounds to the consuming of the fire of our God, and the purifying that dwells therein?

The only argument that I can think of, which would with me have weight against this conclusion, is, that the revulsion of feeling in any one who had thus sinned against the truth, when once brought to acknowledge his sin, would be so terrible that life would never more be endurable, and the kindest thing God could do would be to put such a man out of being, because it had been a better thing for him never to have been born. But he who could make such a man repent, could make him so sorrowful and lowly, and so glad

that he had repented, that he would wish to live ever that he might ever repent and ever worship the glory he now beheld. When a man gives up self, his past sins will no longer oppress him. It is enough for the good of life that God lives, that the All-perfect exists, and that we can behold him.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," said the Divine, making excuse for his murderers, not after it was all over, but at the very moment when he was dying by their hands. Then Jesus had forgiven them already. His prayer the Father must have heard, for he and the Son are one. When the Father succeeded in answering his prayer, then his forgiveness in the hearts of the murderers broke out in sorrow, repentance, and faith. Here was a sin dreadful enough surely—but easy for our Lord to forgive. All that excuse for the misled populace! Lord Christ be thanked for that! That was like thee! But must we believe that Judas, who repented even to agony; who repented so that his high-prized life, self, soul, became worthless in his eyes

and met with no mercy at his own hand,—must we believe that he could find no mercy in such a God? I think, when Judas fled from his hanged and fallen body, he fled to the tender help of Jesus, and found it —I say not how. He was in a more hopeful condition now than during any moment of his past life, for he had never repented before. But I believe that Jesus loved Judas even when he was kissing him with the traitor's kiss; and I believe that he was his Saviour still. And if any man remind me of his words, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born," I had not forgotten them, though I know that I now offer nothing beyond a conjectural explanation of them when I say: Judas had got none of the good of the world into which he had been born. He had not inherited the earth. He had lived an evil life, out of harmony with the world and its God. Its love had been lost upon him. He had been brought to the very Son of God, and had lived with him as his own familiar friend; and he had not loved him more, but less than him-

self. Therefore it had been all useless. "It had been good for that man if he had not been born;" for it was all to try over again, in some other way—inferior perhaps, in some other world, in a lower school. He had to be sent down the scale of creation which is ever ascending towards its Maker. But I will not, cannot believe, O my Lord, that thou wouldst not forgive thy enemy, even when he repented, and did thee right. Nor will I believe that thy holy death was powerless to save thy foe — that it could not reach to Judas. Have we not heard of those, thine own, taught of thee, who could easily forgive their betrayers in thy name? And if thou forgivest, will not thy forgiveness find its way at last in redemption and purification?

Look for a moment at the clause preceding my text: "He that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." What does it mean? Does it mean—"Ah! you are mine, but not of my sort. You denied me. Away to the outer darkness"? Not

so. "It shall be forgiven to him that speaketh against the Son of man;" for He may be but the truth revealed *without* him. Only he must have shame before the universe of the loving God, and may need the fire that burneth and consumeth not.

But for him that speaketh against the Spirit of Truth, against the Son of God revealed *within* him, he is beyond the teaching of that Spirit now. For how shall he be forgiven? The forgiveness would touch him no more than a wall of stone. Let him know what it is to be without the God he hath denied. Away with him to the Outer Darkness! Perhaps *that* will make him repent.

My friends, I offer this as only a contribution towards the understanding of our Lord's words. But if we ask him, he will lead us into all truth. And let us not be afraid to think, for he will not take it ill.

But what I have said must be at least a part of the truth.

No amount of discovery in his words can tell us

more than *we* have discovered, more than we have seen and known to be true. For all the help the best of his disciples can give us is only to discover, to see for ourselves.

And beyond all our discoveries in his words and being, there lie depths within depths of truth that we cannot understand, and yet shall be ever going on to understand. Yea, even now sometimes we seem to have dim glimpses into regions from which we receive no word to bring away.

The fact that some things have become to us so much more simple than they were, and that great truths have come out of what once looked common, is ground enough for hope that such will go on to be our experience through the ages to come. Our advance from our former ignorance can measure but a small portion of the distance that lies, and must ever lie, between our childishness and his manhood, between our love and his love, between our dimness and his mighty vision.

To him ere long may we all come, all children, still children, more children than ever, to receive from his hand the *white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*

THE NEW NAME.

To him that overcometh, I will give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.—REV. ii. 17.

WHETHER the Book of the Revelation be written by the same man who wrote the Gospel according to St John or not, there is, at least, one element common to the two—the mysticism.

I use the word *mysticism* as representing a certain mode of embodying truth, common, in various degrees, to almost all, if not all, the writers of the New Testament. The attempt to define it thoroughly would require an essay. I will hazard but one suggestion towards it: A mystical mind is one which, having perceived that the highest expression of which

the truth admits, lies in the symbolism of nature and the human customs that result from human necessities, prosecutes thought about truth so embodied by dealing with the symbols themselves after logical forms. This is the highest mode of conveying the deepest truth; and the Lord himself often employed it, as, for instance, in the whole passage ending with the words, "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!"

The mysticism in the Gospel of St John is of the simplest, and, therefore, noblest nature. No dweller in this planet can imagine a method of embodying truth that shall be purer, loftier, truer to the truth embodied. There may be higher modes in other worlds, or there may not—I cannot tell; but of all our modes these forms are best illustrations of the highest. Apparently the mysticism of St John's own nature enabled him to remember and report with sufficient accuracy the words of our Lord, always, it seems to me, of a recognizably different kind from those of any of the

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writers of the New Testament—chiefly, perhaps, in the simplicity of their poetical mysticism.

But the mysticism in the Book of the Revelation is more complicated, more gorgeous, less poetic, and occasionally, I think, perhaps arbitrary, or approaching the arbitrary; *reminding* one, in a word, of the mysticism of Swedenborg. Putting aside both historical and literary criticism, in neither of which with regard to the authorship of these two books have I a right even to an opinion, I would venture to suggest that possibly their difference in tone is just what one might expect when the historian of a mystical teacher and the recorder of his mystical sayings, proceeds to embody his own thoughts, feelings, and inspirations; that is, when the revelation flows no longer from the lips of the Master, but through the disciple's own heart, soul, and brain. For surely not the most idolatrous of our Bible-worshipping brothers and sisters will venture to assert that the Spirit of God could speak as freely by the lips of the wind-swayed, reed-

like, rebukable Peter, or of the Thomas who could believe his own eyes, but neither the word of his brethren, nor the nature of his Master, as by the lips of Him who was blind and deaf to everything but the will of him that sent him.

Truth is truth, whether from the lips of Jesus or Balaam. But, in its deepest sense, *the truth* is a condition of heart, soul, mind, and strength towards God and towards our fellow—not an utterance, not even a *right* form of words; and therefore such truth coming forth in words is, in a sense, the person that speaks. And many of the utterances of truth in the Revelation, commonly called of St John, are not merely lofty in form, but carry with them the conviction that the writer was no mere "trumpet of a prophecy," but spoke that he did know, and testified that he had seen.

In this passage about the gift of the white stone, I think we find the essence of religion.

What the notion in the mind of the writer with regard to the white stone was, is, I think, of com-

paratively little moment. I take the stone to belong more to the arbitrary and fanciful than to the true mystical imagery, although for the bringing out of the mystical thought in which it is concerned, it is of high and honourable dignity. For fancy itself will subserve the true imagination of the mystic, and so be glorified. I doubt if the writer himself associated any essential meaning with it. Certainly I will not allow that he had such a poor notion in it as that of a voting pebble—white, because the man who receives it is accepted or chosen. The word is used likewise for a precious stone set as a jewel. And the writer thought of it mystically, a mode far more likely to involve a reference to nature than to a political custom. What his mystic meaning may be, must be taken differently by different minds. I think he sees in its whiteness purity, and in its substance indestructibility. But I care chiefly to regard the stone as the vehicle of the name, — as the form whereby the name is represented as passing from God to the man, and what

is involved in this communication is what I wish to show. If my reader will not acknowledge my representation as St John's meaning, I yet hope so to set it forth that he shall see the representation to be true in itself, and then I shall willingly leave the interpretation to its fate.

I say, in brief, the giving of the white stone with the new name is the communication of what God thinks about the man to the man. It is the divine judgment, the solemn holy doom of the righteous man, the "Come, thou blessed," spoken to the individual.

In order to see this, we must first understand what is the idea of a name,—that is, what is the perfect notion of a name. For, seeing the mystical energy of a holy mind here speaks of God as giving something, we must understand that the essential thing, and not any of its accidents or imitations, is intended.

A name of the ordinary kind in this world, has nothing essential in it. It is but a label by which one

man and a scrap of his external history may be known from another man and a scrap of his history. The only names which have significance are those which the popular judgment or prejudice or humour bestows, either for ridicule or honour, upon a few out of the many. Each of these is founded upon some external characteristic of the man, upon some predominant peculiarity of temper, some excellence or the reverse of character, or something which he does or has done well or ill enough, or at least, singularly enough, to render him, in the eyes of the people, worthy of such distinction from other men. As far as they go, these are real names, for, in some poor measure, they express individuality.

The true name is one which expresses the character, the nature, the being, the *meaning* of the person who bears it. It is the man's own symbol,—his soul's picture, in a word,—the sign which belongs to him and to no one else. Who can give a man this, his own name? God alone. For no one but God sees

what the man is, or even, seeing what he is, could express in a name-word the sum and harmony of what he sees. To whom is this name given? To him that overcometh. When is it given? When he has overcome. Does God then not know what a man is going to become? As surely as he sees the oak which he put there lying in the heart of the acorn. Why then does he wait till the man has become by overcoming ere he settles what his name shall be? He does not wait; he knows his name from the first. But as—although repentance comes because God pardons—yet the man becomes aware of the pardon only in the repentance; so it is only when the man has become his name that God gives him the stone with the name upon it, for then first can he understand what his name signifies. It is the blossom, the perfection, the completion, that determines the name; and God foresees that from the first, because he made it so; but the tree of the soul, before its blossom comes, cannot understand what blossom it is to bear, and could not know what the

word meant, which, in representing its own unarrived completeness, named itself. Such a name cannot be given until the man *is* the name.

God's name for a man must then be the expression in a mystical word—a word of that language which all who have overcome understand—of his own idea of the man, that being whom he had in his thought when he began to make the child, and whom he kept in his thought through the long process of creation that went to realize the idea. To tell the name is to seal the success—to say, "In thee also I am well pleased."

But we are still in the region of symbol. For supposing that such a form were actually observed between God and him that overcometh, it would be no less a symbol—only an acted one. We must therefore look deeper still for the fulness of its meaning. Up to this point little has been said to justify our expectations of discovery in the text. Let us, I say, look deeper. We shall not look long before we

find that the mystic symbol has for its centre of significance the fact of the personal individual relation of every man to his God. That every man has affairs, and those his first affairs, with God, stands to the reason of every man who associates any meaning or feeling with the words, Maker, Father, God. Were we but children of a day, with the understanding that some one had given us that one holiday, there would be something to be thought, to be felt, to be done, because we knew it. For then our nature would be according to our fate, and we could worship and die. But it would be only the praise of the dead, not the praise of the living, for death would be the deepest, the lasting, the overcoming. We should have come out of nothingness, not out of God. He could only be our Maker, not our Father, our Origin. But now we know that God cannot be the God of the dead—must be the God of the living; inasmuch as to know that we died, would freeze the heart of worship, and we could not say Our God, or feel him worthy of

such worth-ship as we could render. To him who offers unto this God of the living his own self of sacrifice, to him that overcometh, him who has brought his individual life back to its source, who knows that he is *one* of God's children, *this* one of the Father's making, he giveth the white stone. To him who climbs on the stair of all his God-born efforts and God-given victories up to the height of his being —that of looking face to face upon his ideal self in the bosom of the Father—God's *him*, realized in him through the Father's love in the Elder Brother's devotion—to him God gives the new name written.

But I leave this, because that which follows embraces and intensifies this individuality of relation in a fuller development of the truth. For the name is one "which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Not only then has each man his individual relation to God, but each man has his peculiar relation to God. He is to God a peculiar being, made after his own fashion, and that of no one else; for when

he is perfected he shall receive the new name which no one else can understand. Hence he can worship God as no man else can worship him, — can understand God as no man else can understand him. This or that man may understand God more, may understand God better than he, but no other man can understand God *as* he understands him. God give me grace to be humble before thee, my brother, that I drag not my simulacrum of thee before the judgment-seat of the unjust judge, but look up to thyself for what revelation of God thou and no one else canst give. As the fir-tree lifts up itself with a far different need from the need of the palm-tree, so does each man stand before God, and lift up a different humanity to the common Father. And for each God has a different response. With every man he has a secret—the secret of the new name. In every man there is a loneliness, an inner chamber of peculiar life into which God only can enter. I say not it is *the innermost chamber*—but a chamber into which no brother, nay, no sister can come.

From this it follows that there is a chamber also —(O God, humble and accept my speech)—a chamber in God himself, into which none can enter but the one, the individual, the peculiar man, — out of which chamber that man has to bring revelation and strength for his brethren. This is that for which he was made —to reveal the secret things of the Father.

By his creation, then, each man is isolated with God; each, in respect of his peculiar making, can say, "*my* God;" each can come to him alone, and speak with him face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend. There is no *massing* of men with God. When he speaks of gathered men, it is as a spiritual *body*, not a *mass*. For in a body every smallest portion is individual, and therefore capable of forming a part of the body.

See, now, what a significance the symbolism of our text assumes. Each of us is a distinct flower or tree in the spiritual garden of God,—precious, each for his own sake, in the eyes of him who is even now making us,—each of us watered and shone upon and

filled with life, for the sake of his flower, his completed being, which will blossom out of him at last to the glory and pleasure of the great gardener. For each has within him a secret of the Divinity; each is growing towards the revelation of that secret to himself, and so to the full reception, according to his measure, of the divine. Every moment that he is true to his true self, some new shine of the white stone breaks on his inward eye, some fresh channel is opened upward for the coming glory of the flower, the conscious offering of his whole being in beauty to the Maker. Each man, then, is in God's sight worth. Life and action, thought and intent, are sacred. And what an end lies before us! To have a consciousness of our own ideal being flashed into us from the thought of God! Surely for this may well give way all our paltry self-consciousnesses, our self-admirations and self-worships! Surely to know what he thinks about us will pale out of our souls all our thoughts about ourselves! and we may well hold them loosely now, and

be ready to let them go. Towards this result St Paul had already drawn near, when he who had begun the race with a bitter cry for deliverance from the body of his death, was able to say that he judged his own self no longer.

"But is there not the worst of all dangers involved in such teaching—the danger of spiritual pride?" If there be, are we to refuse the spirit for fear of the pride? Or is there any other deliverance from pride except the spirit? Pride springs from supposed success in the high aim: with attainment itself comes humility. But here there is no room for ambition. Ambition is the desire to be above one's neighbour; and here there is no possibility of comparison with one's neighbour: no one knows what the white stone contains except the man who receives it. Here is room for endless aspiration towards the unseen ideal; none for ambition. Ambition would only be higher than others; aspiration would be high. Relative worth is not only unknown—to the children of the kingdom it

is unknowable. Each esteems the other better than himself. How shall the rose, the glowing heart of the summer heats, rejoice against the snowdrop risen with hanging head from the white bosom of the snow? Both are God's thoughts; both are dear to him; both are needful to the completeness of his earth and the revelation of himself. "God has cared to make me for himself," says the victor with the white stone, "and has called me that which I like best; for my own name must be what I would have it, seeing it is myself. What matter whether I be called a grass of the field, or an eagle of the air? a stone to build into his temple, or a Boanerges to wield his thunder? I am his; his idea, his making; perfect in my kind, yea, perfect in his sight; full of him, revealing him, alone with him. Let him call me what he will. The name shall be precious as my life. I seek no more."

Gone then will be all anxiety as to what his neighbour may think about him. It is enough that God thinks about him. To be something to God—is not

that praise enough? To be a thing that God cares for and would have complete for himself, because it is worth caring for—is not that life enough?

Neither will he thus be isolated from his fellows. For that we say of one, we say of all. It is as *one* that the man has claims amongst his fellows. Each will feel the sacredness and awe of his neighbour's dark and silent speech with his God. Each will regard the other as a prophet, and look to him for what the Lord hath spoken. Each, as a high priest returning from his Holy of Holies, will bring from his communion some glad tidings, some gospel of truth, which, when spoken, his neighbours shall receive and understand. Each will behold in the other a marvel of revelation, a present son or daughter of the Most High, come forth from him to reveal him afresh. In God each will draw nigh to each.

Yes, there will be danger — danger as everywhere; but he giveth more grace. And if the man who has striven up the heights should yet fall from them into

the deeps, is there not that fire of God, the consuming fire, which burneth and destroyeth not?

To no one who has not already had some speech with God, or who has not at least felt some aspiration towards the fount of his being, can all this appear other than foolishness. So be it.

But, Lord, help them and us, and make our being grow into thy likeness. If through ages of strife and ages of growth, yet let us at last see thy face, and receive the white stone from thy hand. That thus we may grow, give us day by day our daily bread. Fill us with the words that proceed out of thy mouth. Help us to lay up *treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt.*

THE HEART WITH THE TREASURE.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.—MATT. vi. 19, 20, 21.

TO understand the words of our Lord is the business of life. For it is the main road to the understanding of The Word himself. And to receive him is to receive the Father, and so to have Life in ourselves. And Life, the higher, the deeper, the simpler, the original, is the business of life.

The Word is that by which we live, namely, Jesus himself; and his words represent, in part, in shadow, in suggestion, himself. Any utterance worthy of being

called *a truth*, is human food: how much more *The Word*, presenting no abstract laws of our being, but the vital relation of soul and body, heart and will, strength and rejoicing, beauty and light, to Him who first gave birth to them all! The Son came forth to *be*, before our eyes and in our hearts, that which he had made us for, that we might behold *the truth* in him, and cry out for the living God, who, in the highest sense of all is The Truth, not as understood, but as understanding, living, and being, doing and creating the truth. "I am the truth," said our Lord; and by those who are in some measure like him in being the truth, the Word can be understood. Let us try to understand him.

Sometimes, no doubt, the Saviour would have spoken after a different *fashion* of speech, if he had come to Englishmen, instead of to Jews. But the lessons he gave would have been the same; for even when questioned about a matter for its passing import, his reply contained the enunciation of the great human

principle which lay in it, and *that* lies changeless in every variation of changeful circumstance. With the light of added ages of Christian experience, it ought to be easier for us to understand his words than it was for those who heard him.

What, I ask now, is here the power of his word *For: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also?* The meaning of the reason thus added is not obvious upon its surface. It has to be sought for because of its depth at once and its simplicity. But it is so complete, so imaginatively comprehensive, so immediately operative on the conscience through its poetic suggestiveness, that when it is once understood, there is nothing more to be said, but everything to be done.

"Why not lay up for ourselves treasures upon earth?"

"Because there the moth and rust and the thief come."

"And so we should lose those treasures!"

"Yes; by the moth and the rust and the thief."

"Does the Lord then mean that the *reason* for not laying up such treasures is their transitory and corruptible nature?"

"No. He adds a *For*: 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'"

"Of course the heart will be where the treasure is; but what has that to do with the argument?"

This: that what is with the treasure must fare as the treasure; that the heart which haunts the treasure-house where the moth and rust corrupt, will be exposed to the same ravages as the treasure, will itself be rusted and moth-eaten.

Many a man, many a woman, fair and flourishing to see, is going about with a rusty moth-eaten heart within that form of strength or beauty.

"But this is only a figure."

True. But is the reality intended, less or more than the figure? Does not *the rust and the moth* mean more than disease? And does not *the heart*

mean more than the heart? Does it not mean a deeper heart, the heart of your own self, not of your body? of the *self* that suffers, not pain, but misery? of the self whose end is not comfort, or enjoyment, but blessedness, yea, ecstasy? a heart which is the inmost chamber wherein springs the divine fountain of your being? a heart which God regards, though you may never have known its existence, not even when its writhings under the gnawing of the moth and the slow fire of the rust have communicated a dull pain to that outer heart which sends the blood to its appointed course through your body? If God sees that heart corroded with the rust of cares, riddled into caverns and films by the worms of ambition and greed, then your heart is as God sees it, for God sees things as they are. And one day you will be compelled to see, nay, to *feel* your heart as God sees it; and to know that the cankered thing which you have within you, a prey to the vilest of diseases, is indeed the centre of your being, your very heart.

Nor does the lesson apply to those only who worship Mammon, who give their lives, their best energies to the accumulation of wealth: it applies to those equally who, in any way worship the transitory; who seek the praise of men more than the praise of God; who would make a show in the world by wealth, by taste, by intellect, by power, by art, by genius of any kind, and so would gather golden opinions to be treasured in a storehouse of earth.

Nor to such only, but surely to those as well whose pleasures are of a more evidently transitory nature still, such as the pleasures of the senses in every direction—whether lawfully or unlawfully indulged, if the joy of being is centred in them—do these words bear terrible warning. For the hurt lies not in this—that these pleasures are false like the deceptions of magic, for such they are not: pleasures they are; nor yet in this—that they pass away, and leave a fierce disappointment behind: that is only so much the better; but the hurt lies in this — that the immortal, the infinite, created

in the image of the everlasting God, is housed with the fading and the corrupting, and clings to them as its good—clings to them till it is infected and interpenetrated with their proper diseases, which assume in it a form more terrible in proportion to the superiority of its kind, that which is mere decay in the one becoming moral vileness in the other, that which fits the one for the dunghill casting the other into the outer darkness; creeps, that it may share with them, into a burrow in the earth, where its budded wings wither and damp and drop away from its shoulders, instead of haunting the open plains and the high-uplifted table-lands, spreading abroad its young pinions to the sun and the air, and strengthening them in further and further flights, till at last they should become strong to bear the God-born into the presence of its Father in Heaven. Therein lies the hurt.

He whose heart is sound because it haunts the treasure-house of heaven may *be tempted of the devil*, but will be first *led up of the Spirit into the wilderness*.

THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them: and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him: and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.—MATT. iv. 1–11.

THIS narrative must have one of two origins. Either it is an invention, such as many tales told of our Lord in the earlier periods of Christianity; or it came from our Lord himself, for, according to the story, except the wild beasts, of earthly presence there was none at his Temptation.

As to the former of the two origins: The story bears upon it no sign of human invention. The man who could see such things as are here embodied, dared not invent such an embodiment for them. To one in doubt about the matter it will be helpful, I think, to compare this story with the best of those for which one or other of the apocryphal gospels is our only authority —say the grand account of the Descent into Hell in the Gospel according to Nicodemus.

If it have not this origin, there is but the other that

it can have—Our Lord himself. To this I will return presently.

And now, let us approach the subject from another side.

With this in view, I ask you to think how much God must know of which we know nothing. Think what an abyss of truth was our Lord, out of whose divine darkness, through that revealing countenance, that uplifting voice, those hands whose tenderness has made us great, broke all holy radiations of human significance. Think of his understanding, imagination, heart, in which lay the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Must he not have known, felt, imagined, rejoiced in things that would not be told in human words, could not be understood by human hearts? Was he not always bringing forth out of the light inaccessible? Was not his very human form a veil hung over the face of the truth that, even in part by dimming the effulgence of the glory, it might reveal? What could be conveyed must be thus conveyed: an infinite More must lie be-

hind. And even of those things that might be partially revealed to men, could he talk to his Father and talk to his disciples in altogether the same forms, in altogether the same words? Would what he said to God on the mountain-tops, in the dim twilight or the gray dawn, never be such that his disciples could have understood it no more than the people, when the voice of God spoke to him from heaven, could distinguish that voice from the inarticulate thunderings of the element?

There is no attempt made to convey to us even the substance of the battle of those forty days. Such a conflict of spirit as for forty days absorbed all the human necessities of *The Man* in the cares of the Godhead could not be rendered into forms intelligible to us, or rather, could not be in itself intelligible to us, and therefore could not take any form of which we could lay hold. It is not till the end of those forty days that the divine event begins to dawn out from the sacred depths of the eternal thought, becomes

human enough to be made to appear, admits of utterance, becomes capable of being spoken in human forms to the ears of men, though yet only in a dark saying, which he that hath ears to hear may hear, and he that hath a heart to understand may understand. For the mystery is not left behind, nor can the speech be yet clear unto men.

At the same moment when the approaching event comes within human ken, may from afar be dimly descried by the God-upheld intelligence, the same humanity seizes on the Master, and he is an hungred. The first sign that he has come back to us, that the strife is approaching its human result, is his hunger. On what a sea of endless life do we float, are our poor necessities sustained—not the poorest of them dissociated from the divine! Emerging from the storms of the ocean of divine thought and feeling into the shallower waters that lave the human shore, bearing with him the treasures won in the strife, our Lord is straightway an hungred; and from this moment the temptation

is human, and can be in some measure understood by us.

But could it even then have been conveyed to the human mind in merely intellectual forms? Or, granting that it might, could it be so conveyed to those who were only beginning to have the vaguest, most error-mingled and confused notions about our Lord and what he came to do? No. The inward experiences of our Lord, such as could be conveyed to them at all, could be conveyed to them only in a parable. For far plainer things than these, our Lord chose this form. The form of the parable is the first in which truth will admit of being embodied. Nor is this all: it is likewise the fullest; and to the parable will the teacher of the truth ever return. Is he who asserts that the passage contains a simple narrative of actual events, prepared to believe, as the story, so interpreted, indubitably gives us to understand, that a visible demon came to our Lord and, himself the prince of worldly wisdom, thought,

by quoting Scripture after the manner of the priests, to persuade a good man to tempt God; thought, by the promise of power, to prevail upon him to cast aside every claim he had upon the human race, in falling down and worshipping one whom he knew to be the adversary of Truth, of Humanity, of God? How could Satan be so foolish? or, if Satan might be so foolish, wherein could such temptation so presented have tempted our Lord? and wherein would a victory over such be a victory for the race?

Told as a parable, it is as full of meaning as it would be bare if received as a narrative.

Our Lord spake then this parable unto them, and so conveyed more of the truth with regard to his temptation in the wilderness, than could have been conveyed by any other form in which the truth he wanted to give them might have been embodied. Still I do not think it follows that we have it exactly as he told it to his disciples. A man will hear but what he can hear, will see but what he can see, and,

telling the story again, can tell but what he laid hold of, what he seemed to himself to understand. His effort to reproduce the impression made upon his mind will, as well as the impression itself, be liable to numberless altering, modifying, even, in a measure, discomposing influences. But it does not, therefore, follow that the reproduction is false. The mighty hosts of life-bearing worlds, requiring for the freedom of their courses, and the glory of their changes, such awful abysses of space, dwindle in the human eye to seeds of light sown upon a blue plain. How faint in the ears of man is the voice of their sphere-born thunder of adoration! Yet are they lovely indeed, uttering speech and teaching knowledge. So this story may not be just as the Lord told it, and yet may contain in its mirror as much of the truth as we are able to receive, and as will afford us sufficient scope for a life's discovery. The modifying influences of the human channels may be essential to God's revealing mode. It is only by seeing them first from afar that we learn the laws of the heavens.

And now arises the question upon the right answer to which depends the whole elucidation of the story: *How could the Son of God be tempted?*

If any one say that he was not moved by those temptations, he must be told that then they were no temptations to him, and he was not tempted; nor was his victory of more significance than that of the man who, tempted to bear false witness against his neighbour, abstains from robbing him of his goods. For human need, struggle, and hope, it bears no meaning; and we must reject the whole as a fantastic folly of crude invention; a mere stage-show; a lie for the poor sake of the fancied truth; a doing of evil that good might come; and, with how many fragments soever of truth its mud may be filled, not in any way to be received as a divine message.

But asserting that these were real temptations if the story is to be received at all, am I not involving myself in a greater difficulty still? For how could the Son of God be tempted with evil—with that which

must to him appear in its true colours of discord, its true shapes of deformity? Or how could he then be the Son of his Father who cannot be tempted with evil?

In the answer to this lies the centre, the essential germ of the whole interpretation: He was not tempted with Evil but with Good; with inferior forms of good, that is, pressing in upon him, while the higher forms of good held themselves aloof, biding their time, that is, God's time. I do not believe that the Son of God could be tempted with evil, but I do believe that he could be tempted with good—to yield to which temptation would have been evil in him —ruin to the universe.

But does not all evil come from good?

Yes; but it has come *from* it. It is no longer good. A good corrupted is no longer a good. Such could not tempt our Lord. Revenge may originate in a sense of justice, but it is revenge not justice; an evil thing, for it would be fearfully unjust. Evil is evil whatever it may have come from. The Lord

could not have felt tempted to take vengeance upon his enemies, but he might have felt tempted to destroy the wicked from the face of the earth—to destroy them from the face of the earth, I say, not to destroy them for ever. To that I do not think he could have felt tempted.

But we shall find illustration enough of what I mean in the matter itself. Let us look at the individual temptations represented in the parable.

The informing idea which led to St Matthew's arrangement seems to me superior to that showing itself in St Luke's. In the two accounts, the closes, while each is profoundly significant, are remarkably different.

Now let us follow St Matthew's record.

And we shall see how the devil tempted him *to* evil, but not *with* evil.

First, He was hungry, and the devil said, *Make bread of this stone.*

The Lord had been fasting for forty days—a fast impossible except during intense mental absorption.

Let no one think to glorify this fast by calling it miraculous. Wonderful such fasts are on record on the part of holy men; and inasmuch as the Lord was more of a man than his brethren, insomuch might he be farther withdrawn in the depths of his spiritual humanity from the outer region of his physical nature. So much the slower would be the goings on of that nature; and fasting in his case might thus be extended beyond the utmost limits of similar fasts in others. This, I believe, was all—and this *all* infinite in its relations. This is the grandest, simplest, and most significant, and, therefore, the divinest way of regarding his fast. Hence, at the end of the forty days, it was not hunger alone that made food tempting to him, but that exhaustion of the whole system, wasting itself all the time it was forgotten, which, reacting on the mind when the mind was already worn out with its own tension, must have deadened it so, that (speaking after the experience of his brethren, which alone will explain his,) it could for the time see or feel nothing of

the spiritual, and could only *believe in* the unfelt, the unseen. What a temptation was here! There is no sin in wishing to eat; no sin in procuring food honestly that one may eat. But it rises even into an awful duty, when a man knows that to eat will restore the lost vision of the eternal; will, operating on the brain, and thence on the mind, render the man capable of hope as well as of faith, of gladness as well as of confidence, of praise as well as of patience. Why then should he not eat? Why should he not put forth the power that was in him that he might eat? Because such power was his, not to take care of himself, but to work the work of him that sent him. Such power was his not even to honour his Father save as his Father chose to be honoured, who is far more honoured in the ordinary way of common wonders, than in the extraordinary way of miracles. Because it was God's business to take care of him, his to do what the Father told him to do. To make that stone bread would be to take

the care out of the Father's hands, and turn the divinest thing in the universe into the merest commonplace of self-preservation.

And in nothing was he to be beyond his brethren, save in faith. No refuge for him, any more than for them, save in the love and care of the Father. Other refuge, let it be miraculous power or what you will, would be but hell to him. God is refuge. God is life.

"Was he not to eat when it came in his way? And did not the bread come in his way, when his power met that which could be changed into it?"

Regard that word *changed*. The whole matter lies in that. Changed from what? From what God had made it. Changed into what? Into what he did not make it. Why changed? Because the Son was hungry, and the Father would not feed him with food convenient for him! The Father did not give him a stone when he asked for bread. It was Satan that brought the stone and told him to provide for himself. The Father said, That is a stone. The Son would

not say, That is a loaf. No one creative *fiat* shall contradict another. The Father and the Son are of one mind. The Lord could hunger, could starve, but would not change into another thing what his Father had made one thing.*

If we regard the answer he gave the devil, we shall see the root of the matter at once: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Yea even by the word which made that stone that stone. Everything is all right. It is life indeed for him to

* There was no such change in the feeding of the multitudes. The fish and the bread were fish and bread before. I think this is significant as regards the true nature of a miracle, and its relation to the ordinary ways of God. There was in these miracles, and I think in all, only a hastening of appearances; the doing of that in a day, which may ordinarily take a thousand years, for with God time is not what it is with us. He makes it. And the hastening of a process does not interfere in the least with cause and effect in the process, nor does it render the process one whit more miraculous. Indeed, the wonder of the growing corn is to me greater than the wonder of feeding the thousands. It is easier to understand the creative power going forth at once — immediately—than through the countless, the lovely, the seemingly forsaken wonders of the corn-field. To the merely scientific man all this is pure nonsense, or at best belongs to the region of the fancy. The time will come, I think, when he will see that there is more in it, namely, a higher reason, a loftier science, how incorrectly soever herein indicated.

leave that a stone, which the Father had made a stone. It would be death to him to alter one word that He had spoken.

"Man shall not live by bread alone." There are other ways of living besides that which comes by bread. A man will live by the word of God, by what God says to him, by what God means between Him and him, by the truths of being which the Father alone can reveal to his child, by the communion of love between them. Without the bread he will die, as men say; but he will not find that he dies. He will only find that the tent which hid the stars from him is gone, and that he can see the heavens; or rather, the earthly house will melt away from around him, and he will find that he has a palace-home about him, another and loftier word of God clothing upon him. So the man lives by the word of God even in refusing the bread which God does not give him, for, instead of dying because he does not eat, he rises into a higher life even of the same kind.

For I have been speaking of the consciousness of existence, and not of that higher spiritual life on which all other life depends. That of course can for no one moment exist save from the heart of God. When a man tries to live by bread and not by the word that comes out of that heart of God, he may think he lives, but he begins to die or is dead. Our Lord says, "I can do without the life that comes of bread: without the life that comes of the word of my Father, I die indeed." Therefore he does not think twice about the matter. That God's will be done is all his care. That done, all will be right, and all right with him, whether he thinks about himself or not. For the Father does not forget the child who is so busy trusting in him, that he cares not even to pray for himself.

In the higher aspect of this first temptation, arising from the fact that a man cannot feel the things he believes except under certain conditions of physical well-being dependent upon food, the answer is the same: A man

does not live by his feelings any more than by bread, but by the Truth, that is, the Word, the Will, the uttered Being of God.

I am even ashamed to yield here to the necessity of writing what is but as milk for babes, when I would gladly utter, if I might, only that which would be as bread for men and women. What I must say is this: that, by *the Word of God*, I do not understand *The Bible*. The Bible is *a* Word of God, the chief of his written words, because it tells us of The Word, the Christ; but everything God has done and given man to know is a word of his, a will of his; and inasmuch as it is a will of his, it is a necessity to man, without which he cannot live: the reception of it is man's life. For inasmuch as God's utterances are a whole, every smallest is essential: he speaks no foolishness—there are with him no vain repetitions. But by *the word* of the God and not Maker only, who is God just because he *speaks* to men, I must understand, in the deepest sense, every revelation of Himself in the

heart and consciousness of man, so that the man knows that God is there, nay, rather, that he is here. Even Christ himself is not The Word of God in the deepest sense *to a man*, until he is this Revelation of God to the man,—until the Spirit that is the meaning in the Word has come to him,—until the speech is not a sound as of thunder, but the voice of words; for a word is more than an utterance—it is a sound to be understood. No word, I say, is fully a Word *of* God until it is a Word *to* man, until the man therein recognizes God. This is that for which the word is spoken. The words of God are as the sands and the stars,—they cannot be numbered; but the end of all and each is this—to reveal God. Nor, moreover, can the man know that any one of them is the word of God, save as it comes thus to him, is a revelation of God in him. It is *to* him that it may be *in* him; but till it is *in* him he cannot *know* that it was *to* him. God must be God *in* man before man can know that he is God, or that he has received aright,

and for that for which it was spoken, any one of his words.*

If, by any will of God—that is, any truth in him—we live, we live by it tenfold when that will has become a word to us. When we receive it, his will becomes our will, and so we live by God. But the word of God once understood, a man must live by the faith of what God is, and not by his own feelings even in regard to God. It is the Truth itself, that which God is, known by what goeth out of his mouth, that man lives by. And when he can no longer *feel* the truth, he shall not therefore die. He lives because God is true; and he is able to know that he lives because he knows, having once understood the word, that God is truth. He believes in the God of former vision, lives by that word therefore, when all is dark and there is no vision.

* No doubt the humble spirit will receive the testimony of every one whom he reveres, and look in the direction indicated for a word from the Father; but till he thus receives it in his heart, he cannot know what the word spoken of is.

We now come to the second attempt of the Enemy.

"Then if God is to be so trusted, try him. Fain would I see the result. Shew thyself his darling. Here is the word itself for it: He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; not a stone shall hurt thee. Take him at his word. Throw thyself down, and strike the conviction into me that thou art the Son of God. For thou knowest thou dost not look like what thou sayest thou art."

Again, with a written word, in return, the Lord meets him. And he does not quote the scripture for logical purposes—to confute Satan intellectually, but as giving even Satan the reason of his conduct. Satan quotes Scripture as a verbal authority; our Lord meets him with a Scripture by the truth in which he regulates his conduct.

If we examine it, we shall find that this answer contains the same principle as the former, namely this, that to the Son of God the will of God is Life. It was a temptation to shew the powers of the world that

he was the Son of God; that to him the elements were subject; that he was above the laws of Nature, because he was the Eternal Son; and thus stop the raging of the heathen, and the vain imaginations of the people. It would be but to shew them the truth. But he was the *Son* of God: what was his *Father's* will? Such was not the divine way of convincing the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment. If the Father told him to cast himself down, that moment the pinnacle pointed naked to the sky. If the devil threw him down, let God send his angels; or, if better, allow him to be dashed to pieces in the valley below. But never will he forestall the divine will. The Father shall order what comes next. The Son will obey. In the path of his work he will turn aside for no stone. There let the angels bear him in their hands if need be. But he will not choose the path because there is a stone in it. He will not choose at all. He will go where the Spirit leads him.

I think this will throw some light upon the words of

our Lord, "If ye have faith and doubt not, if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done." Good people, amongst them John Bunyan, have been tempted to tempt the Lord their God upon the strength of this saying, just as Satan sought to tempt our Lord on the strength of the passage he quoted from the Psalms. Happily for such, the assurance to which they would give the name of faith generally fails them in time. Faith is that which, knowing the Lord's will, goes and does it; or, not knowing it, stands and waits, content in ignorance as in knowledge, because God wills; neither pressing into the hidden future, nor careless of the knowledge which opens the path of action. It is its noblest exercise to act with uncertainty of the result, when the duty itself is certain, or even when a course seems with strong probability to be duty.* But to put God to the question in any other way than by

* In the latter case a man may be mistaken, and his work will be burned, but by that very fire he will be saved. Nothing saves a man more than the burning of his work, except the doing of work that can stand the fire.

saying, What wilt thou have me to do? is an attempt to compel God to declare himself, or to hasten his work. This probably was the sin of Judas. It is presumption of a kind similar to the making of a stone into bread. It is, as it were, either a forcing of God to act where he has created no need for action, or the making of a case wherein he shall seem to have forfeited his word if he does not act. The man is therein dissociating himself from God so far that, instead of acting by the divine will from within, he acts in God's face, as it were, to see what he will do. Man's first business is, "What does God want me to do?" not "What will God do if I do so and so?" To tempt a parent after the flesh in such a manner would be impertinence: to tempt God so is the same vice in its highest form—a natural result of that condition of mind which is worse than all the so-called cardinal sins, namely, spiritual pride, which attributes the tenderness and love of God not to man's being and man's need, but to some distinguishing excellence in the individual himself, which causes the Father to love

him better than his fellows, and so pass by his faults with a smile. Not thus did the Son of God regard his relation to his Father. The faith which will remove mountains is that confidence in God which comes from seeking nothing but his will. A man who was thus faithful would die of hunger sooner than say to the stone, *Be bread;* would meet the scoffs of the unbelieving without reply and with apparent defeat, sooner than say to the mountain, *Be thou cast into the sea,* even if he knew that it would be torn from its foundations at the word, except he knew first that God would have it so.

And thus I am naturally brought to consider more fully how this should be a real temptation to the Son of Man. It would be good to confound his adversaries; to force conviction upon them that he was the God-supported messenger he declared himself. Why should he have adversaries a moment longer to interfere between him and the willing hearts which would believe if they could? The answer to all this was plain to our Lord, and is plain to us now: It was not the way of the

Father's will. It would not fall in with that gradual development of life and history by which the Father works, and which must be the way to breed free, God-loving wills. It would be violent, theatrical, therefore poor in nature and in result,—not God-like in any way. Everything in God's doing comes harmoniously with and from all the rest. Son of Man, his history shall be a man's history, shall be The Man's history. Shall that begin with an exception? Yet it might well be a temptation to Him who longed to do all he could for men. He was the Son of God: why should not the sons of God know it?

But as this temptation in the wilderness was an epitome and type of the temptations to come, against which for forty days he had been making himself strong, revolving truth beyond our reach, in whose light every commonest duty was awful and divine, a vision fit almost to oppress a God in his humiliation, so we shall understand the whole better if we look at his life in relation to it. As he refused to make stones bread, so through-

out that life he never wrought a miracle to help himself; as he refused to cast himself from the temple to convince Satan or glory visibly in his Sonship, so he steadily refused to give the sign which the human Satans demanded, notwithstanding the offer of conviction which they held forth to bribe him to the grant. How easy it seems to have confounded them, and strengthened his followers! But such conviction would stand in the way of a better conviction in his disciples, and would do his adversaries only harm. For neither could not in any true sense be convinced by such a show: it could but prove his power. It might prove so far the presence of a God; but would it prove that God? Would it bring him nearer to them, who could not see him in the face of his Son? To say *Thou art God*, without knowing what the *Thou* means—of what use is it? God is a name only, except we know *God*. Our Lord did not care to be so acknowledged.

On the same principle, the very miracles which from their character did partially reveal his character to

those who already had faith in him, he would not do where unbelief predominated. He often avoided cities and crowds, and declined mighty works because of unbelief. Except for the loving help they gave the distressed, revealing him to their hearts as the Redeemer from evil, I doubt if he would have wrought a single miracle. I do not think he cared much about them. Certainly, as regarded the onlookers, he did not expect much to result from those mighty deeds. A mere marvel is practically soon forgotten, and long before it is forgotten, many minds have begun to doubt the senses, their own even, which communicated it. Inward sight alone can convince of truth; signs and wonders never. No number of signs can do more than convey a probability that he who shews them knows that of which he speaks. They cannot convey the truth. But the vision of the truth itself, in the knowledge of itself, a something altogether beyond the region of signs and wonders, is the power of God, is salvation. This vision was in the Lord's face

and form to the pure in heart who were able to see God; but not in his signs and wonders to those who sought after such. Yet it is easy to see how the temptation might for a moment work upon a mind that longed to enter upon its labours with the credentials of its truth. How the true heart longs to be received by its brethren—to be known in its truth! But no. The truth must show itself in God's time, in and by the labour. The kingdom must come in God's holy human way. Not by a stroke of grandeur, but by years of love, yea, by centuries of seeming bafflement, by æons of labour, must he grow into the hearts of the sons and daughters of his Father in heaven. The Lord himself *will* be bound by the changeless laws which are the harmony of the Father's being and utterance. He will *be*, not seem. He will be, and thereby, not therefore, seem. Yet, once more, even on him, the idea of asserting the truth in holy power such as he could have put forth, must have dawned in grandeur. The thought was good: to have yielded to it would have been the loss

of the world; nay, far worse—ill inconceivable to the human mind—the God of obedience had fallen from his throne, and——all is blackness.

But let us not forget that the whole is a faint parable—faint I mean in relation to the grandeur of the reality, as the ring and the shoes are poor types (yet how dear!) of the absolute love of the Father to his prodigal children.

We shall now look at the third temptation. The first was to help himself in his need; the second, perhaps, to assert the Father; the third to deliver his brethren.

To deliver them, that is, after the fashion of men—from the outside still. Indeed, the whole Temptation may be regarded as the contest of the seen and the unseen, of the outer and inner, of the likely and the true, of the show and the reality. And as in the others, the evil in this last lay in that it was a temptation to save his brethren, instead of doing the will of his Father.

Could it be other than a temptation to think that he might, if he would, lay a righteous grasp upon the

reins of government, leap into the chariot of power, and ride forth conquering and to conquer? Glad visions arose before him of the prisoner breaking jubilant from the cell of injustice; of the widow lifting up the bowed head before the devouring Pharisee; of weeping children bursting into shouts at the sound of the wheels of the chariot before which oppression and wrong shrunk and withered, behind which sprung the fir-tree instead of the thorn, and the myrtle instead of the brier. What glowing visions of holy vengeance, what rosy dreams of human blessedness—and all from his hand—would crowd such a brain as his!—not like the castles-in-the-air of the aspiring youth, for he builds at random, because he knows that he cannot realize; but consistent and harmonious as well as grand, because he knew them within his reach. Could he not mould the people at his will? Could he not, transfigured in his snowy garments, call aloud in the streets of Jerusalem, "Behold your King?" And the fierce warriors of his nation would start at the sound; the

ploughshare would be beaten into the sword, and the pruning-hook into the spear; and the nation, rushing to his call, learn war yet again indeed,—a grand, holy war—a crusade—no; we should not have had *that* word; but a war against the tyrants of the race—the best, as they called themselves—who trod upon their brethren, and would not suffer them even to look to the heavens.—Ah! but when were his garments white as snow? When, through them, glorifying them as it passed, did the light stream from his glorified body? Not when he looked to such a conquest; but when, on a mount like this, he "spake of the decease that he should *accomplish* at Jerusalem"! Why should this be "the sad end of the war"? "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Not even thine own visions of love and truth, O Saviour of the world, shall be thy guides to thy goal, but the will of thy Father in heaven.

But how would he, thus conquering, be a servant of Satan? Wherein would this be a falling-down and a

worshipping of him (that is, an acknowledging of the worth of him) who was the lord of misrule and its pain?

I will not inquire whether such an enterprise could be accomplished without the worship of Satan,—whether men could be managed for such an end without more or less of the trickery practised by every ambitious leader, every self-serving conqueror—without double-dealing, tact, flattery, finesse. I will not inquire into this, because, on the most distant supposition of our Lord being the leader of his country's armies, these things drop out of sight as impossibilities. If these were necessary, such a career for him refuses to be for a moment imagined. But I will ask whether to know better and do not so well, is not a serving of Satan;—whether to lead men on in the name of God as towards the best when the end is not the best, is not a serving of Satan;—whether to flatter their pride by making them conquerors of the enemies of their nation instead of their own evils, is not a serving of Satan;—

in a word, whether, to desert the mission of God, who knew that men could not be set free in that way, and sent him to be a man, a true man, the one man, among them, that his life might become their life, and that so they might be as free in prison or on the cross, as upon a hill-side or on a throne,—whether, so deserting the truth, to give men over to the lie of believing other than spirit and truth to be the worship of the Father, other than love the fulfilling of the law, other than the offering of their best selves the service of God, other than obedient harmony with the primal love and truth and law, freedom,—whether, to desert God thus, and give men over thus, would not have been to fall down and worship the devil. Not all the sovereignty of God, as the theologians call it, delegated to the Son, and administered by the wisdom of the Spirit that was given to him without measure, could have wrought the kingdom of heaven in one corner of our earth. Nothing but the obedience of the Son, the obedience unto the death, the absolute

doing of the will of God because it was the truth, could redeem the prisoner, the widow, the orphan. But it would redeem them by redeeming the conquest-ridden conqueror too, the stripe-giving jailer, the unjust judge, the devouring Pharisee himself with the insatiable moth-eaten heart. The earth should be free because Love was stronger than Death. Therefore should fierceness and wrong and hypocrisy and God-service play out their weary play. He would not pluck the spreading branches of the tree; he would lay the axe to its root. It would take time; but the tree would be dead at last—dead, and cast into the lake of fire. It would take time; but his Father had time enough and to spare. It would take courage and strength and self-denial and endurance; but his Father could give him all. It would cost pain of body and mind, yea, agony and torture; but those he was ready to take on himself. It would cost him the vision of many sad and, to all but him, hopeless sights; he must see tears without wiping them, hear sighs with-

out changing them into laughter, see the dead lie, and let them lie; see Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted; he must look on his brothers and sisters crying as children over their broken toys, and must not mend them; he must go on to the grave, and they not know that thus he was setting all things right for them. His work must be one with and completing God's Creation and God's History. The disappointment and sorrow and fear he could, he would bear. The will of God should be done. Man should be free,—not merely man as he thinks of himself, but man as God thinks of him. The divine idea shall be set free in the divine bosom; the man on earth shall see his angel face to face. He shall grow into the likeness of the divine thought, free not in his own fancy, but in absolute divine fact of being, as in God's idea. The great and beautiful and perfect will of God *must* be done.

"Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

It was when Peter would have withstood him as he set his face steadfastly to meet this death at Jerusalem, that he gave him the same kind of answer that he now gave to Satan, calling him Satan too.

"Then the devil leaveth him, and behold angels came and ministered unto him."

So saith St Matthew. They brought him the food he had waited for, walking in the strength of the word. He would have died if it had not come now.

"And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season."

So saith St Luke.

Then Satan ventured once more. When?

Was it then, when at the last moment, in the agony of the last faint, the Lord cried out, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" when, having done the great work, having laid it aside clean and pure as the linen cloth that was ready now to infold him, another cloud than that on the mount overshadowed his soul, and out of it came a voiceless persuasion that, after all

was done, God did not care for his work or for him?

Even in those words the adversary was foiled—and for ever. For when he seemed to be forsaken, his cry was still, "*My God! my God!*"

THE ELOI.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—ST MATTHEW xxvii. 46.

I DO not know that I should dare to approach this, of all utterances into which human breath has ever been moulded, most awful in import, did I not feel that, containing both germ and blossom of the final devotion, it contains therefore the deepest practical lesson the human heart has to learn. The Lord, the Revealer, hides nothing that can be revealed, and will not warn away the foot that treads in naked humility even upon the ground of that terrible conflict between him and Evil, when the smoke of the battle that was fought not only with garments rolled in blood but with burning and fuel of fire, rose up between him and his Father, and for

the one terrible moment ere he broke the bonds of life, and walked weary and triumphant into his arms, hid God from the eyes of his Son. He will give us even to meditate the one thought that slew him at last, when he could bear no more, and fled to the Father to know that he loved him, and was well-pleased with him. For Satan had come at length yet again, to urge him with his last temptation; to tell him that although he had done his part, God had forgotten his; that although he had lived by the word of his mouth, that mouth had no word more to speak to him; that although he had refused to tempt him, God had left him to be tempted more than he could bear; that although he had worshipped none other, for that worship God did not care. The Lord hides not his sacred sufferings, for truth is light, and would be light in the minds of men. The Holy Child, the Son of the Father, has nothing to conceal, but all the Godhead to reveal. Let us then put off our shoes, and draw near, and bow the head, and kiss those

feet that bear for ever the scars of our victory. In those feet we clasp the safety of our suffering, our sinning brotherhood.

It is with the holiest fear that we should approach the terrible fact of the sufferings of our Lord. Let no one think that those were less because he was more. The more delicate the nature, the more alive to all that is lovely and true, lawful and right, the more does it feel the antagonism of pain, the inroad of death upon life; the more dreadful is that breach of the harmony of things whose sound is torture. He felt more than man could feel, because he had a larger feeling. He was even therefore worn out sooner than another man would have been. These sufferings were awful indeed when they began to invade the region about the will; when the struggle to keep consciously trusting in God began to sink in darkness; when the Will of The Man put forth its last determined effort in that cry after the vanishing vision of the Father: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken*

me? Never had it been so with him before. Never before had he been unable to see God beside him. Yet never was God nearer him than now. For never was Jesus more divine. He could not see, could not feel him near; and yet it is "*My* God" that he cries.

Thus the Will of Jesus, in the very moment when his faith seems about to yield, is finally triumphant. It has no *feeling* now to support it, no beatific vision to absorb it. It stands naked in his soul and tortured, as he stood naked and scourged before Pilate. Pure and simple and surrounded by fire, it declares for God. The sacrifice ascends in the cry, *My God.* The cry comes not out of happiness, out of peace, out of hope. Not even out of suffering comes that cry. It was a cry *in* desolation, but it came out of Faith. It is the last voice of Truth, speaking when it can but cry. The divine horror of that moment is unfathomable by human soul. It was blackness of darkness. And yet he would believe. Yet he would hold fast. God

was his God yet. *My God*—and in the cry came forth the Victory, and all was over soon. Of the peace that followed that cry, the peace of a perfect soul, large as the universe, pure as light, ardent as life, victorious for God and his brethren, he himself alone can ever know the breadth and length, and depth and height.

Without this last trial of all, the temptations of our Master had not been so full as the human cup could hold; there would have been one region through which we had to pass wherein we might call aloud upon our Captain-Brother, and there would be no voice or hearing: he had avoided the fatal spot! The temptations of the desert came to the young, strong man with his road before him and the presence of his God around him; nay, gathered their very force from the exuberance of his conscious faith. "Dare and do, for God is with thee," said the devil. "I know it, and therefore I will wait," returned the king of his brothers. And now, after three years of divine action, when his course

is run, when the old age of finished work is come, when the whole frame is tortured until the regnant brain falls whirling down the blue gulf of fainting, and the giving up of the ghost is at hand, when the friends have forsaken him and fled, comes the voice of the enemy again at his ear: "Despair and die, for God is not with thee. All is in vain. Death, not Life, is thy refuge. Make haste to Hades, where thy torture will be over. Thou hast deceived thyself. He never was with thee. He was the God of Abraham. Abraham is dead. Whom makest thou thyself?" "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" the Master cries. For God was his God still, although he had forsaken him—forsaken *his vision* that his faith might glow out triumphant; forsaken *himself?* no; come nearer to him than ever; come nearer, even as — but with a yet deeper, more awful pregnancy of import—even as the Lord himself withdrew from the bodily eyes of his friends, that he might dwell in their profoundest being.

I do not think it was our Lord's deepest trial when

in the garden he prayed that the cup might pass from him, and prayed yet again that the will of the Father might be done. For that will was then present with him. He was living and acting in that will. But now the foreseen horror has come. He is drinking the dread cup, and the Will has vanished from his eyes. Were that Will visible in his suffering, his will could bow with tearful gladness under the shelter of its grandeur. But now his will is left alone to drink the cup of The Will in torture. In the sickness of this agony, the Will of Jesus arises perfect at last; and of itself, unsupported now, declares—a naked consciousness of misery hung in the waste darkness of the universe — declares for God, in defiance of pain, of death, of apathy, of self, of negation, of the blackness within and around it; calls aloud upon the vanished God.

This is the Faith of the Son of God. God withdrew, as it were, that the perfect Will of the Son might arise and go forth to find the Will of the Father.

Is it possible that even then he thought of the lost

sheep who could not believe that God was their Father; and for them, too, in all their loss and blindness and unlove, cried, saying the word they might say, knowing for them that *God* means *Father* and more, and knowing now, as he had never known till now, what a fearful thing it is to be without God and without hope? I dare not answer the question I put.

But wherein or what can this Alpine apex of faith have to do with the creatures who call themselves Christians, creeping about in the valleys, hardly knowing that there are mountains above them, save that they take offence at and stumble over the pebbles washed across their path by the glacier streams? I will tell you. We are and remain such creeping Christians, because we look at ourselves and not at Christ; because we gaze at the marks of our own soiled feet, and the trail of our own defiled garments, instead of up at the snows of purity, whither the soul of Christ clomb. Each, putting his foot in the footprint of the Master, and so defacing it, turns to examine how far his neigh-

bour's footprint corresponds with that which he still calls the Master's, although it is but his own. Or, having committed a petty fault, I mean a fault such as only a petty creature could commit, we mourn over the defilement to ourselves, and the shame of it before our friends, children, or servants, instead of hastening to make the due confession and amends to our fellow, and then, forgetting our paltry self with its well-earned disgrace, lift up our eyes to the glory which alone will quicken the true man in us, and kill the peddling creature we so wrongly call our *self*. The true self is that which can look Jesus in the face, and say *My Lord*.

When the inward sun is shining, and the wind of thought, blowing where it lists amid the flowers and leaves of fancy and imagination, rouses glad forms and feelings, it is easy to look upwards, and say *My God*. It is easy when the frosts of external failure have braced the mental nerves to healthy endurance and fresh effort after labour, it is easy then to turn to God and trust in him, in whom all honest exertion gives an ability as well

as a right to trust. It is easy in pain, so long as it does not pass certain undefinable bounds, to hope in God for deliverance, or pray for strength to endure. But what is to be done when all feeling is gone? when a man does not know whether he believes or not, whether he loves or not? when art, poetry, religion are nothing to him, so swallowed up is he in pain, or mental depression, or disappointment, or temptation, or he knows not what? It seems to him then that God does not care for him, and certainly he does not care for God. If he is still humble, he thinks that he is so bad that God cannot care for him. And he then believes for the time that God loves us only because and when and while we love him; instead of believing that God loves us always because he is our God, and that we live only by his love. Or he does not believe in a God at all, which is better.

So long as we have nothing to say to God, nothing to do with him, save in the sunshine of the mind when we feel him near us, we are poor creatures, willed upon,

not willing; reeds, flowering reeds, it may be, and pleasant to behold, but only reeds blown about of the wind; not bad, but poor creatures.

And how in such a condition do we generally act? Do we not sit mourning over the loss of our feelings? or worse, make frantic efforts to rouse them? or, ten times worse, relapse into a state of temporary atheism, and yield to the pressing temptation? or, being heartless, consent to remain careless, conscious of evil thoughts and low feelings alone, but too lazy, too content to rouse ourselves against them? We know we must get rid of them some day, but meantime—never mind; we do not *feel* them bad, we do not feel anything else good; we are asleep and we know it, and we cannot be troubled to wake. No impulse comes to arouse us, and so we remain as we are.

God does not, by the instant gift of his Spirit, make us always feel right, desire good, love purity, aspire after him and his will. Therefore either he will not, or he cannot. If he will not, it must be because it would not

be well to do so. If he cannot, then he would not if he could; else a better condition than God's is conceivable to the mind of God—a condition in which he could save the creatures whom he has made, better than he can save them. The truth is this: He wants to make us in his own image, *choosing* the good, *refusing* the evil. How should he effect this if he were *always* moving us from within, as he does at divine intervals, towards the beauty of holiness? God gives us room *to be;* does not oppress us with his will; "stands away from us," that we may act from ourselves, that we may exercise the pure will for good. Do not, therefore, imagine me to mean that we can do anything of ourselves without God. If we choose the right at last, it is all God's doing, and only the more his that it is ours, only in a far more marvellous way his than if he had kept us filled with all holy impulses precluding the need of choice. For up to this very point, for this very point, he has been educating us, leading us, pushing us, driving us, enticing us, that we may choose him and his

will, and so be tenfold more his children, of his own best making, in the freedom of the will found our own first in its loving sacrifice to him, for which in his grand fatherhood he has been thus working from the foundations of the earth, than we could be in the most ecstatic worship flowing from the divinest impulse, without this *willing* sacrifice. For God made our individuality as well as, and a greater marvel than, our dependence; made our *apartness* from himself, that freedom should bind us divinely dearer to himself, with a new and inscrutable marvel of love; for the Godhead is still at the root, is the making root of our individuality, and the freer the man, the stronger the bond that binds him to him who made his freedom. He made our wills, and is striving to make them free; for only in the perfection of our individuality and the freedom of our wills can we be altogether his children. This is full of mystery, but can we not see enough in it to make us very glad and very peaceful?

Not in any other act than one which, in spite of im-

pulse or of weakness, declares for the Truth, for God, does the will spring into absolute freedom, into true life.

See, then, what lies within our reach every time that we are thus lapt in the folds of night. The highest condition of the human will is in sight, is attainable. I say not the highest condition of the Human Being; that surely lies in the Beatific Vision, in the sight of God. But the highest condition of the Human Will, as distinct, not as separated from God, is when, not seeing God, not seeming to itself to grasp him at all, it yet holds him fast. It cannot continue in this condition, for, not finding, not seeing God, the man would die; but the will thus asserting itself, the man has passed from death into life, and the vision is nigh at hand. Then first, thus free, in thus asserting its freedom, is the individual will one with the Will of God; the child is finally restored to the father; the childhood and the fatherhood meet in one; the brotherhood of the race arises from the dust; and the prayer of our Lord is answered, "I in them and thou in me, that they may be

made perfect in one." Let us then arise in God-born strength every time that we feel the darkness closing, or become aware that it has closed around us, and say, "I am of the Light and not of the Darkness."

Troubled soul, thou art not bound to feel, but thou art bound to arise. God loves thee whether thou feelest or not. Thou canst not love when thou wilt, but thou art bound to fight the hatred in thee to the last. Try not to feel good when thou art not good, but cry to Him who is good. He changes not because thou changest. Nay, he has an especial tenderness of love towards thee for that thou art in the dark and hast no light, and his heart is glad when thou dost arise and say, "I will go to my Father." For he sees thee through all the gloom through which thou canst not see him. Will thou his will. Say to him: "My God, I am very dull and low and hard; but thou art wise and high and tender, and thou art my God. I am thy child. Forsake me not." Then fold the arms of thy faith, and wait in quietness until light goes up in thy darkness. Fold the

arms of thy Faith I say, but not of thy Action: bethink thee of something that thou oughtest to do, and go and do it, if it be but the sweeping of a room, or the preparing of a meal, or a visit to a friend. Heed not thy feelings: Do thy work.

As God lives by his own will, and we live in him, so has he given to us power to will in ourselves. How much better should we not fare if, finding that we are standing with our heads bowed away from the good, finding that we have no feeble inclination to seek the source of our life, we should yet *will* upwards toward God, rousing that essence of life in us, which he has given us from his own heart, to call again upon him who is our Life, who can fill the emptiest heart, rouse the deadest conscience, quicken the dullest feeling, and strengthen the feeblest will!

Then, if ever the time should come, as perhaps it must come to each of us, when all consciousness of well-being shall have vanished, when the earth shall be but a sterile promontory, and the heavens a dull and

pestilent congregation of vapours, when man nor woman shall delight us more, nay, when God himself shall be but a name, and Jesus an old story, then, even then, when a Death far worse than "that phantom of grisly bone" is griping at our hearts, and having slain love, hope, faith, forces existence upon us only in agony, then, even then, we shall be able to cry out with our Lord, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Nor shall we die then, I think, without being able to take up his last words as well, and say, "*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*"

THE HANDS OF THE FATHER.

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."
—ST LUKE xxiii. 46.

NEITHER St Matthew nor St Mark tells us of any words uttered by our Lord after the *Eloi.* They both, along with St Luke, tell us of a cry with a loud voice, and the giving up of the ghost; between which cry and the giving up, St Luke records the words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." St Luke says nothing of the Eloi prayer of desolation. St John records neither the *Eloi*, nor the *Father into thy hands*, nor the loud cry. He tells us only that after Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "*It is finished,*" and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Will the Lord ever tell us why he cried so? Was it the cry of relief at the touch of death? Was it the cry

of victory? Was it the cry of gladness that he had endured to the end? Or did the Father look out upon him in answer to his *My God*, and the blessedness of it make him cry aloud because he could not smile? Was such his condition now that the greatest gladness of the universe could express itself only in a loud cry? Or was it but the last wrench of pain ere the final repose began? It may have been all in one. But never surely in all books, in all words of thinking men, can there be so much expressed as lay unarticulated in that cry of the Son of God. Now had he made his Father Lord no longer in the might of making and loving alone, but Lord in right of devotion and deed of love. Now should inward sonship and the spirit of glad sacrifice be born in the hearts of men; for the divine obedience was perfected by suffering. He had been amongst his brethren what he would have his brethren be. He had done for them what he would have them do for God and for each other. God was henceforth inside and beneath them, as well as

around and above them, suffering with them and for them, giving them all he had, his very life-being, his essence of existence, what best he loved, what best he was. He had been among them, their God-brother. And the mighty story ends with a cry.

Then the cry meant, *It is finished;* the cry meant, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* Every highest human act is just a giving back to God of that which he first gave to us. "Thou God hast given me: here again is thy gift. I send my spirit home." Every act of worship is a holding up to God of what God hath made us. "Here, Lord, look what I have got: feel with me in what thou hast made me, in this thy own bounty, my being. I am thy child, and know not how to thank thee save by uplifting the heave-offering of the overflowing of thy life, and calling aloud, 'It is thine: it is mine. I am thine, and therefore I am mine.'" The vast operations of the spiritual as of the physical world, are simply a turning again to the source.

The last act of our Lord in thus commending his spirit at the close of his life, was only a summing up of what he had been doing all his life. He had been offering this sacrifice, the sacrifice of himself, all the years, and in thus sacrificing he had lived the divine life. Every morning when he went out ere it was day, every evening when he lingered on the night-lapt mountain after his friends were gone, he was offering himself to his Father in the communion of loving words, of high thoughts, of speechless feelings; and, between, he turned to do the same thing in deed, namely, in loving word, in helping thought, in healing action towards his fellows; for the way to worship God while the daylight lasts is to work; the service of God, the only "divine service," is the helping of our fellows.

I do not seek to point out this commending of our spirits to the Father as a duty: that is to turn the highest privilege we possess into a burden grievous to be borne. But I want to shew that it is the simplest blessedest thing in the human world.

For the Human Being may say thus with himself: "Am I going to sleep—to lose consciousness—to be helpless for a time—thoughtless—dead? Or, more awful consideration, in the dreams that may come may I not be weak of will and scant of conscience?—Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. I give myself back to thee. Take me, soothe me, refresh me, 'make me over again.' Am I going out into the business and turmoil of the day, where so many temptations may come to do less honourably, less faithfully, less kindly, less diligently than the Ideal Man would have me do?—Father, into thy hands. Am I going to do a good deed? Then, of all times,—Father, into thy hands; lest the enemy should have me now. Am I going to do a hard duty, from which I would gladly be turned aside,—to refuse a friend's request, to urge a neighbour's conscience?—Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. Am I in pain? Is illness coming upon me to shut out the glad visions of a healthy brain, and bring me such as are troubled and untrue?—Take my spirit, Lord, and see, as

thou art wont, that it has no more to bear than it can bear. Am I going to die? Thou knowest, if only from the cry of thy Son, how terrible that is; and if it comes not to me in so terrible a shape as that in which it came to him, think how poor to bear I am beside him. I do not know what the struggle means; for, of the thousands who pass through it every day, not one enlightens his neighbour left behind; but shall I not long with agony for one breath of thy air, and not receive it? shall I not be torn asunder with dying?—I will question no more: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. For it is thy business, not mine. Thou wilt know every shade of my suffering; thou wilt care for me with thy perfect fatherhood; for that makes my sonship, and inwraps and infolds it. As a child I could bear great pain when my father was leaning over me, or had his arm about me: how much nearer my soul cannot thy hands come!—yea, with a comfort, father of me, that I have never yet even imagined; for how shall my imagination overtake thy swift heart? I care not for

the pain, so long as my spirit is strong, and into thy hands I commend that spirit. If thy love, which is better than life, receive it, then surely thy tenderness will make it great."

Thus may the Human Being say with himself.

Think, brothers, think, sisters, we walk in the air of an eternal fatherhood. Every uplifting of the heart is a looking up to The Father. Graciousness and truth are around, above, beneath us, yea, *in* us. When we are least worthy, then, most tempted, hardest, unkindest, let us yet commend our spirits into his hands. Whither else dare we send them? How the earthly father would love a child who would creep into his room with angry, troubled face, and sit down at his feet, saying when asked what he wanted: "I feel so naughty, papa, and I want to get good"! Would he say to his child: "How dare you! Go away, and be good, and then come to me?" And shall we dare to think God would send us away if we came thus, and would not be pleased that we came, even if we were angry as Jonah? Would we

not let all the tenderness of our nature flow forth upon such a child? And shall we dare to think that if we being evil know how to give good gifts to our children, God will not give us his own spirit when we come to ask him? Will not some heavenly dew descend cool upon the hot anger? some genial rain-drop on the dry selfishness? some glance of sunlight on the cloudy hopelessness? Bread, at least, will be given, and not a stone; water, at least, will be sure, and not vinegar mingled with gall.

Nor is there anything we can ask for ourselves that we may not ask for another. We may commend any brother, any sister, to the common fatherhood. And there will be moments when, filled with that spirit which is the Lord, nothing will ease our hearts of their love but the commending of all men, all our brothers, all our sisters, to the one Father. Nor shall we ever know that repose in the Father's hands, that rest of the Holy Sepulchre, which the Lord knew when the agony of death was over, when the storm of the world died away

behind his retiring spirit, and he entered the regions where there is only life, and therefore all that is not music is silence, (for all noise comes of the conflict of Life and Death)—we shall never be able, I say, to rest in the bosom of the Father, till the fatherhood is fully revealed to us in the love of the brothers. For he cannot be our father save as he is their father; and if we do not see him and feel him as their father, we cannot know him as ours. Never shall we know him aright until we rejoice and exult for our race that he is *the* Father. He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? To rest, I say, at last, even in those hands into which the Lord commended his spirit, we must have learned already *to love our neighbour as ourselves.*

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR.

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.—ST MATTHEW xxii. 39.

THE original here quoted by our Lord is to be found in the words of God to Moses, (*Leviticus* xix. 18:) "*Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.*" Our Lord never thought of being original. The older the saying the better, if it utters the truth he wants to utter. In him it becomes fact: The *Word* was made *flesh*. And so, in the wondrous meeting of extremes, the words he spoke were no more words, but spirit and life.

The same words are twice quoted by St Paul, and once by St James, always in a similar mode: Love they represent as the fulfilling of the law.

Is the converse true then? Is the fulfilling of the law love? The apostle Paul says: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Does it follow that *working no ill* is love? Love will fulfil the law: will the law fulfil love? No, verily. If a man keeps the law, I know he is a lover of his neighbour. But he is not a lover because he keeps the law: he keeps the law because he is a lover. No heart will be content with the law for love. The law cannot fulfil love.

"But, at least, the law will be able to fulfil itself, though it reaches not to love."

I do not believe it. I am certain that it is impossible to keep the law towards one's neighbour except one loves him. The law itself is infinite, reaching to such delicacies of action, that the man who tries most will be the man most aware of defeat. We are not made for law, but for love. Love is law, because it is infinitely more than law. It is of an altogether higher region than law—is, in fact, the creator of law. Had

it not been for love, not one of the *shalt-nots* of the law would have been uttered. True, once uttered, they shew themselves in the form of justice, yea, even in the inferior and worldly forms of prudence and self-preservation; but it was love that spoke them first. Were there no love in us, what sense of justice could we have? Would not each be filled with the sense of his own wants, and be for ever tearing to himself? I do not say it is *conscious* love that breeds justice, but I do say that without love in our nature justice would never be born. For I do not call that justice which consists only in a sense of *our own* rights. True, there are poor and withered forms of love which are immeasurably below justice now; but even now they are of speechless worth, for they will grow into that which will supersede, because it will necessitate, justice.

Of what use then is the law? To lead us to Christ, the Truth,—to waken in our minds a sense of what our deepest nature, the presence, namely, of God *in*

us, requires of us,—to let us know, in part by failure, that the purest effort of will of which we are capable cannot lift us up even to the abstaining from wrong to our neighbour. What man, for instance, who loves not his neighbour and yet wishes to keep the law, will dare be confident that never by word, look, tone, gesture, silence, will he bear false witness against that neighbour? What man can judge his neighbour aright save him whose love makes him refuse to judge him? Therefore are we told to love, and not judge. It is the sole justice of which we are capable, and that perfected will comprise all justice. Nay more, to refuse our neighbour love, is to do him the greatest wrong. But of this afterwards. In order to fulfil the commonest law, I repeat, we must rise into a loftier region altogether, a region that is above law, because it is spirit and life and makes the law: in order to keep the law towards our neighbour, we must love our neighbour. We are not made for law, but for grace—or for faith, to use another word so much misused.

We are made on too large a scale altogether to have any pure relation to mere justice, if indeed we can say there is such a thing. It is but an abstract idea which, in reality, will not be abstracted. The law comes to make us long for the needful grace,—that is, for the divine condition, in which love is all, for God is Love.

Though the fulfilling of the law is the practical form love will take, and the neglect of it is the conviction of lovelessness; though it is the mode in which a man's *will* must begin at once to be love to his neighbour, yet, that our Lord meant by the love of our neighbour, not the fulfilling of the law towards him, but that condition of being which results in the fulfilling of the law and more, is sufficiently clear from his story of the good Samaritan. "Who is my neighbour?" said the lawyer. And the Lord taught him that every one to whom he could be or for whom he could do anything was his neighbour; therefore, that each of the race, as he comes within the touch of one tentacle of our nature, is our neighbour. Which of the inhibitions of

the law is illustrated in the tale? Not one. The love that is more than law, and renders its breach impossible, lives in the endless story, coming out in active kindness, that is, the recognition of kin, of *kind*, of nighness, of *neighbourhood;* yea, in tenderness and loving-kindness—the Samaritan-heart akin to the Jew-heart, the Samaritan hands neighbours to the Jewish wounds.

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

So direct and complete is this parable of our Lord, that one becomes almost ashamed of further talk about it. Suppose a man of the company had put the same question to our Lord that we have been considering, had said, "But I may keep the law and yet not love my neighbour," would he not have returned: "Keep thou the law thus, not in the letter, but in the spirit, that is, in the truth of action, and thou wilt soon find, O Jew, that thou lovest thy Samaritan"? And yet, when thoughts and questions arise in our minds, he desires that we should follow them. He

will not check us with a word of heavenly wisdom scornfully uttered. He knows that not even *his* words will apply to every question of the willing soul; and we know that his spirit will reply. When we want to know more, that more will be there for us. Not every man, for instance, finds his neighbour in need of help, and he would gladly hasten the slow results of opportunity by true thinking. Thus would we be ready for further teaching from that Spirit who is the Lord.

"But how," says a man, who is willing to recognize the universal neighbourhead, but finds himself unable to fulfil the bare law towards the woman even whom he loves best,—"How am I then to rise into that higher region, that empyrean of love?" And, beginning straightway to try to love his neighbour, he finds that the empyrean of which he spoke is no more to be reached in itself than the law was to be reached in itself. As he cannot keep the law without first rising into the love of his neighbour, so he cannot

love his neighbour without first rising higher still. The whole system of the universe works upon this law—the driving of things upward towards the centre. The man who will love his neighbour can do so by no immediately operative exercise of the will. It is the man fulfilled of God from whom he came and by whom he is, who alone can as himself love his neighbour who came from God too and is by God too. The mystery of individuality and consequent relation is deep as the beginnings of humanity, and the questions thence arising can be solved only by him who has, practically, at least, solved the holy necessities resulting from his origin. In God alone can man meet man. In him alone the converging lines of existence touch and cross not. When the mind of Christ, the life of the Head, courses through that atom which the man is of the slowly revivifying body, when he is alive too, then the love of the brothers is there as conscious life. From Christ through the neighbours comes the life that makes him a part of the body.

It *is* possible to love our neighbour as ourselves. Our Lord *never* spoke hyperbolically, although, indeed, that is the supposition on which many unconsciously interpret his words, in order to be able to persuade themselves that they believe them. We may see that it is possible before we attain to it; for our perceptions of truth are always in advance of our condition. True, no man can see it perfectly until he is it; but we must see it, that we may be it. A man who knows that he does not yet love his neighbour as himself may believe in such a condition, may even see that there is no other goal of human perfection, nothing else to which the universe is speeding, propelled by the Father's will. Let him labour on, and not faint at the thought that God's day is a thousand years: his millennium is likewise one day—yea, this day, for we have him, The Love, in us, working even now the far end.

But while it is true that only when a man loves God with all his heart, will he love his neighbour as himself, yet there are mingled processes in the attainment of

this final result. Let us try to aid such operation of truth by looking farther. Let us suppose that the man who believes our Lord both meant what he said, and knew the truth of the matter, proceeds to endeavour obedience in this of loving his neighbour as himself. He begins to think about his neighbours generally, and he tries to feel love towards them. He finds at once that they begin to classify themselves. With some he feels no difficulty, for he loves them already, not indeed because they *are*, but because they have, by friendly qualities, by showing themselves lovable, that is loving, already, moved his feelings as the wind moves the waters, that is without any self-generated action on his part. And he feels that this is nothing much to the point; though, of course, he would be farther from the desired end if he had none such to love, and farther still if he loved none such. He recalls the words of our Lord, "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?" and his mind fixes upon—let us say—one of a second class, and he tries

to love him. The man is no enemy—we have not come to that class of neighbours yet—but he is dull, uninteresting—in a negative way, he thinks, unlovable. What is he to do with him? With all his effort, he finds the goal as far off as ever.

Naturally, in his failure, the question arises, "Is it my duty to love him who is unlovable?"

Certainly not, if he is unlovable. But that is a begging of the question.

Thereupon the man falls back on the primary foundation of things, and asks—

"How, then, is the man to be loved by me? Why should I love my neighbour as myself?"

We must not answer "Because the Lord says so." It is because the Lord says so that the man is inquiring after some help to obey. No man can love his neighbour *merely* because the Lord says so. The Lord says so because it is right and necessary and natural, and the man wants to feel it thus right and necessary and natural. Although the Lord would be pleased with

any man for doing a thing because he said it, he would show his pleasure by making the man more and more dissatisfied until he knew why the Lord had said it. He would make him see that he could not in the deepest sense—in the way the Lord loves—obey any command until he saw the reasonableness of it. Observe I do not say the man ought to put off obeying the command until he see its reasonableness: that is another thing quite, and does not lie in the scope of my present supposition. It is a beautiful thing to obey the rightful source of a command: it is a more beautiful thing to worship the radiant source of our light, and it is for the sake of obedient vision that our Lord commands us. For then our heart meets his: we see God.

Let me represent in the form of a conversation what might pass in the man's mind on the opposing sides of the question.—"Why should I love my neighbour?"

"He is the same as I, and therefore I ought to love him."

"Why? I am I. He is he."

"He has the same thoughts, feelings, hopes, sorrows, joys, as I."

"Yes; but why should I love him for that? He must mind his, I can only do with mine."

"He has the same consciousness as I have. As things look to me, so things look to him."

"Yes; but I cannot get into his consciousness, nor he into mine. I feel myself, I do not feel him. My life flows through my veins, not through his. The world shines into my consciousness, and I am not conscious of his consciousness. I wish I could love him, but I do not see why. I am an individual; he is an individual. My self must be closer to me than he can be. Two bodies keep me apart from his self. I am isolated with myself."

Now, here lies the mistake at last. While the thinker supposes a duality in himself which does not exist, he falsely judges the individuality a separation. On the contrary, it is the sole possibility and very bond of love. *Otherness* is the essential ground of affection.

But in spiritual things, such a unity is pre-supposed in the very contemplation of them by the spirit of man, that wherever anything does not exist that ought to be there, the space it ought to occupy, even if but a blank, assumes the appearance of a separating gulf. The negative looks a positive. Where a man does not love, the not-loving must seem rational. For no one loves because he sees why, but because he loves. No human reason can be given for the highest necessity of divinely created existence. For reasons are always from above downwards. A man must just feel this necessity, and then questioning is over. It justifies itself. But he who has not felt has it not to argue about. He has but its phantom, which he created himself in a vain effort to understand, and which he supposes to be it.. Love cannot be argued about in its absence, for there is no reflex, no symbol of it near enough to the fact of it, to admit of just treatment by the algebra of the reason or imagination. Indeed, the very talking about it raises a mist between the mind and the vision

of it. But let a man once love, and all those difficulties which appeared opposed to love, will just be so many arguments for loving.

Let a man once find another who has fallen among thieves; let him be a neighbour to him, pouring oil and wine into his wounds, and binding them up, and setting him on his own beast, and paying for him at the inn; let him do all this merely from a sense of duty; let him even, in the pride of his fancied, and the ignorance of his true calling, bate no jot of his Jewish superiority; let him condescend to the very baseness of his own lowest nature; yet such will be the virtue of obeying an eternal truth even to his poor measure, of putting in actuality what he has not even seen in theory, of doing the truth even without believing it, that even if the truth does not after the deed give the faintest glimmer as truth in the man, he will yet be ages nearer the truth than before, for he will go on his way loving that Samaritan neighbour a little more than his Jewish dignity will justify. Nor will he question the rea-

sonableness of so doing, although he may not care to spend any logic upon its support. How much more if he be a man who would love his neighbour if he could, will the higher condition unsought have been found in the action! For man is a whole; and so soon as he *unites himself* by obedient action, the truth that is in him makes itself known to him, shining from the new whole. For his action is his response to his maker's design, his individual part in the creation of himself, his yielding to the All in all, to the tides of whose harmonious cosmoplastic life all his being thenceforward lies open for interpenetration and assimilation. When will once begins to aspire, it will soon find that action must precede feeling, that the man may know the foundation itself of feeling.

With those who recognize no authority as the ground of tentative action, a doubt, a suspicion of truth ought to be ground enough for putting it to the test.

The whole system of divine education as regards the relation of man and man, has for its end that a man

should love his neighbour as himself. It is not a lesson that he can learn by itself, or a duty the obligation of which can be shown by argument, any more than the difference between right and wrong can be defined in other terms than their own.

"But that difference," it may be objected, "manifests itself of itself to every mind: it is self-evident; whereas the loving of one's neighbour is *not* seen to be a primary truth; so far from it, that far the greater number of those who hope for an eternity of blessedness through him who taught it, do not really believe it to be a truth; believe, on the contrary, that the paramount obligation is to take care of one's self at much risk of forgetting one's neighbour."

But the human race generally has got as far as the recognition of right and wrong; and therefore most men are born capable of making the distinction. The race has not yet lived long enough for its latest offspring to be born with the perception of the truth of love to the neighbour. It is to be seen by the present

individual only after a long reception of and submission to the education of life. And once seen, it is believed.

The whole constitution of human society exists for the express end, I say, of teaching the two truths by which man lives, Love to God and Love to Man. I will say nothing more of the mysteries of the parental relation, because they belong to the teaching of the former truth, than that we come into the world as we do, to look up to the love over us, and see in it a symbol, poor and weak, yet the best we can have or receive of the divine love.* And thousands more would find it easy to love God if they had not such miserable types of him in the self-seeking, impulse-driven, purposeless, faithless beings who are all they have for father and mother, and to whom their children are no dearer than her litter is to the unthinking dam. What I want to speak of now, with regard to the

* It might be expressed after a deeper and truer fashion by saying that, God making human affairs after his own thoughts, they are therefore such as to be the best teachers of love to him and love to our neighbour. This is an immeasurably nobler and truer manner of regarding them than as a scheme or plan invented by the divine intellect.

second great commandment, is the relation of brotherhood and sisterhood. Why does my brother come of the same father and mother? Why do I behold the helplessness and confidence of his infancy? Why is the infant laid on the knee of the child? Why do we grow up with the same nurture? Why do we behold the wonder of the sunset and the mystery of the growing moon together? Why do we share one bed, join in the same games, and attempt the same exploits? Why do we quarrel, vow revenge and silence and endless enmity, and, unable to resist the brotherhood within us, wind arm in arm and forget all within the hour? Is it not that Love may grow lord of all between him and me? Is it not that I may feel towards him what there are no words or forms of words to express—a love namely, in which the divine self rushes forth in utter self-forgetfulness to live in the contemplation of the brother—a love that is stronger than death,—glad and proud and satisfied? But if love stop there, what will be the result? Ruin to itself; loss of the brotherhood.

He who loves not his brother for deeper reasons than those of a common parentage will cease to love him at all. The love that enlarges not its borders, that is not ever spreading and including, and deepening, will contract, shrivel, decay, die. I have had the sons of my mother that I may learn the universal brotherhood. For there is a bond between me and the most wretched liar that ever died for the murder he would not even confess, closer infinitely than that which springs only from having one father and mother. That we are the sons and the daughters of God born from his heart, the outcoming offspring of his love, is a bond closer than all other bonds in one. No man ever loved his own child aright who did not love him for his humanity, for his divinity, to the utter forgetting of his origin from himself. The son of my mother is indeed my brother by this greater and closer bond as well; but if I recognize that bond between him and me at all, I recognize it for my race. True, and thank God! the greater excludes not the less; it makes all the weaker

bonds stronger and fruer, nor forbids that where all are brothers, some should be those of our bosom. Still my brother according to the flesh is my first neighbour, that we may be very nigh to each other, whether we will or no, while our hearts are tender, and so may learn *brotherhood*. For our love to each other is but the throbbing of the heart of the great brotherhood, and could come only from the eternal Father, not from our parents. Then my second neighbour appears, and who is he? Whom I come in contact with soever. He with whom I have any transactions, any human dealings whatever. Not the man only with whom I dine; not the friend only with whom I share my thoughts; not the man only whom my compassion would lift from some slough; but the man who makes my clothes; the man who prints my book; the man who drives me in his cab; the man who begs from me in the street, to whom, it may be, for brotherhood's sake, I must not give; yea, even the man who condescends to me. With all and each there is a chance

of doing the part of a neighbour, if in no other way yet by speaking truly, acting justly, and thinking kindly. Even these deeds will help to that love which is born of righteousness. All true action clears the springs of right feeling, and lets their waters rise and flow. A man must not choose his neighbour; he must take the neighbour that God sends him. In him, whoever he be, lies, hidden or revealed, a beautiful brother. The neighbour is just the man who is next to you at the moment, the man with whom any business has brought you in contact.

Thus will love spread and spread in wider and stronger pulses till the whole human race will be to the man sacredly lovely. Drink-debased, vice-defeatured, pride-puffed, wealth-bollen, vanity-smeared, they will yet be brothers, yet be sisters, yet be God-born neighbours. Any rough-hewn semblance of humanity will at length be enough to move the man to reverence and affection. It is harder for some to learn thus than for others. There are whose first impulse is ever to repel

and not to receive. But learn they may, and learn they must. Even these may grow in this grace until a countenance unknown will awake in them a yearning of affection rising to pain, because there is for it no expression, and they can only give the man to God and be still.

And now will come in all the arguments out of which the man tried in vain before to build a stair up to the sunny heights of love. "Ah brother! thou hast a soul like mine," he will say. "Out of thine eyes thou lookest, and sights and sounds and odours visit thy soul as mine, with wonder and tender comforting. Thou too lovest the faces of thy neighbours. Thou art oppressed with thy sorrows, uplifted with thy joys. Perhaps thou knowest not so well as I, that a region of gladness surrounds all thy grief, of light all thy darkness, of peace all thy tumult. Oh, my brother! I will love thee. I cannot come very near thee: I will love thee the more. It may be thou dost not love thy neighbour; it may be thou thinkest only how to get from him, how to

gain by him. How lonely then must thou be! how shut up in thy poverty-stricken room, with the bare walls of thy selfishness, and the hard couch of thy unsatisfaction! I will love thee the more. Thou shalt not be alone with thyself. Thou art not me; thou art another life—a second self; therefore I can, may, and will love thee."

When once to a man the human face is the human face divine, and the hand of his neighbour is the hand of a brother, then will he understand what St Paul meant when he said, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren." But he will no longer understand those who, so far from feeling the love of their neighbour an essential of their being, expect to be set free from its law in the world to come. There, at least, for the glory of God, they may limit its expansive tendencies to the narrow circle of their heaven. On its battlements of safety, they will regard hell from afar, and say to each other, "Hark! Listen to their moans. But do not weep, for they are our neigh

bours no more." St Paul would be wretched before the throne of God, if he thought there was one man beyond the pale of his mercy, and that as much for God's glory as for the man's sake. And what shall we say of the man Christ Jesus? Who, that loves his brother, would not, upheld by the love of Christ, and with a dim hope that in the far-off time there might be some help for him, arise from the company of the blessed, and walk down into the dismal regions of despair, to sit with the last, the only unredeemed, the Judas of his race, and be himself more blessed in the pains of hell, than in the glories of heaven? Who, in the midst of the golden harps and the white wings, knowing that one of his kind, one miserable brother in the old-world-time when men were taught to love their neighbour as themselves, was howling unheeded far below in the vaults of the creation, who, I say, would not feel that he must arise, that he had no choice, that, awful as it was, he must gird his loins, and go down into the smoke and the darkness and the fire,

travelling the weary and fearful road into the far country to find his brother?—who, I mean, that had the mind of Christ, that had the love of the Father?

But it is a wild question. God is, and shall be, All in all. Father of our brothers and sisters! thou wilt not be less glorious than we, taught of Christ, are able to think thee. When thou goest into the wilderness to seek, thou wilt not come home until thou hast found. It is because we hope not for them in thee, not knowing thee, not knowing thy love, that we are so hard and so heartless to the brothers and sisters whom thou hast given us.

One word more: This love of our neighbour is the only door out of the dungeon of self, where we mope and mow, striking sparks, and rubbing phosphorescences out of the walls, and blowing our own breath in our own nostrils, instead of issuing to the fair sunlight of God, the sweet winds of the universe. The man thinks his consciousness is himself; whereas his life consisteth in the inbreathing of God, and the

consciousness of the universe of truth. To have himself, to know himself, to enjoy himself, he calls life; whereas, if he would forget himself, tenfold would be his life in God and his neighbours. The region of man's life is a spiritual region. God, his friends, his neighbours, his brothers all, is the wide world in which alone his spirit can find room. Himself is his dungeon. If he feels it not now, he will yet feel it one day—feel it as a living soul would feel being prisoned in a dead body, wrapped in sevenfold cerements, and buried in a stone-ribbed vault within the last ripple of the sound of the chanting people in the church above. His life is not in knowing that he lives, but in loving all forms of life. He is made for the All, for God, who is the All, is his life. And the essential joy of his life lies abroad in the liberty of the All. His delights, like those of the Ideal Wisdom, are with the sons of men. His health is in the body of which the Son of Man is the head. The whole region of life is open to him—nay, he must live in it or perish.

Nor thus shall a man lose the consciousness of well-being. Far deeper and more complete, God and his neighbour will flash it back upon him — pure as life. No more will he agonize "with sick assay" to generate it in the light of his own decadence. For he shall know the glory of his own being in the light of God and of his brother.

But he may have begun to love his neighbour, with the hope of ere long loving him as himself, and notwithstanding start back affrighted at yet another word of our Lord, seeming to be another law yet harder than the first, although in truth it is not another, for without obedience to it the former cannot be attained unto. He has not yet learned to love his neighbour as himself whose heart sinks within him at the word, *I say unto you, Love your enemies.*

LOVE THINE ENEMY.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.—ST MATTHEW v. 43–48.

IS not this at length *too* much to expect? Will a man ever love his enemies? He may come to do good to them that hate him; but when will he pray for them that despitefully use him and persecute him?

When? When he is the child of his Father in heaven. Then shall he love his neighbour as himself, even if that neighbour be his enemy. In the passage in Leviticus (xix. 18,) already referred to as quoted by our Lord and his apostles, we find the neighbour and the enemy are one. "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord."

Look at the glorious way in which Jesus interprets the scripture that went before him. "*I am the Lord*," —"That ye may be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Is it then reasonable to love our enemies? God does; therefore it must be the highest reason. But is it reasonable to expect that man should become capable of doing so? Yes; on one ground: that the divine energy is at work in man, to render at length man's doing divine as his nature is. For this our Lord prayed when he said: "That they all may be one,

as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." Nothing could be less likely to human judgment; our Lord knows that one day it will come.

Why should we love our enemies? The deepest reason for this we cannot put in words, for it lies in the absolute reality of their being, where our enemies are of one nature with us, even of the divine nature. Into this we cannot see, save as into a dark abyss. But we can adumbrate something of the form of this deepest reason, if we let the thoughts of our heart move upon the face of the dim profound.

"Are our enemies men like ourselves?" let me begin by asking. "Yes." "Upon what ground? The ground of their enmity? The ground of the wrong they do us?" "No." "In virtue of cruelty, heartlessness, injustice, disrespect, misrepresentation?" "Certainly not. *Humanum est errare* is a truism; but it possesses, like most truisms, a latent germ of worthy truth. The very word *errare* is a sign that there is a way so truly the

human that, for a man to leave it, is to *wander*. If it be human to wander, yet the wandering is not humanity. The very words *humane* and *humanity* denote some shadow of that loving-kindness which, when perfected after the divine fashion, shall include even our enemies. We do not call the offering of human sacrifices, the torturing of captives, cannibalism — humanity. Not because they do such deeds are they men. Their humanity must be deeper than those. It is in virtue of the divine essence which is in them, that pure essential humanity, that we call our enemies men and women. It is this humanity that we are to love —a something, I say, deeper altogether than and independent of the region of hate. It is the humanity that originates the claim of neighbourhead; the neighbourhood only determines the occasion of its exercise." "Is this humanity in every one of our enemies?" "Else there were nothing *to* love." "Is it there in very deed?—Then we *must* love it, come between us and it what may."

But how can we love a man or a woman who is cruel and unjust to us?—who sears with contempt, or cuts off with wrong every tendril we would put forth to embrace?—who is mean, unlovely, carping, uncertain, self-righteous, self-seeking, and self-admiring?—who can even sneer, the most inhuman of human faults, far worse in its essence than mere murder?

These things cannot be loved. The best man hates them most; the worst man cannot love them. But are these the man? Does a woman bear that form in virtue of these? Lies there not within the man and the woman a divine element of brotherhood, of sisterhood, a something lovely and lovable,—slowly fading, it may be,—dying away under the fierce heat of vile passions, or the yet more fearful cold of sepulchral selfishness—but there? Shall that divine something, which, once awakened to be its own holy self in the man, will loathe these unlovely things tenfold more than we loathe them now,—shall this divine thing have no recognition from us? It is the very presence of this fading humanity

that makes it possible for us to hate. If it were an animal only, and not a man or a woman that did us hurt, we should not hate: we should only kill. We hate the man just because we are prevented from loving him. We push over the verge of the creation—*we damn* —just because we cannot embrace. For to embrace is the necessity of our deepest being. That foiled, we hate. Instead of admonishing ourselves that there is our enchained brother, that there lies our enchanted, disfigured, scarce recognizable sister, captive of the devil, to break, how much sooner, from their bonds, that we love them!—we recoil into the hate which would fix them there; and the dearly lovable reality of them we sacrifice to the outer falsehood of Satan's incantations, thus leaving them to perish. Nay, we murder them to get rid of them. we *hate* them. Yet within the most obnoxious to our hate, lies that which, could it but show itself as it is, and as it will show itself one day, would compel from our hearts a devotion of love. It is not the unfriendly, the unlovely, that we

are told to love, but the brother, the sister, who is unkind, who is unlovely. Shall we leave our brother to his desolate fate? Shall we not rather say, "With my love at least shalt thou be compassed about, for thou hast not thy own lovingness to infold thee; love shall come as near thee as it may; and when thine comes forth to meet mine, we shall be one in the indwelling God"?

Let no one say I have been speaking in a figure merely. That I have been so speaking I know. But many things which we see most vividly and certainly are more truly expressed by using a right figure, than by attempting to give them a clear outline of logical expression. My figure means a truth.

If any one say, "Do not make such vague distinctions. There is the person. Can you deny that that person is unlovely? How then can you love him?" I answer, "That person, with the evil thing cast out of him, will be yet more the *person*, for he will be his real self. The thing that now makes you dislike him is separable from

him, is therefore not he, makes himself so much less himself, for it is working death in him. Now he is in danger of ceasing to be a person at all. When he is clothed and in his right mind, he will be a person indeed. You *could* not then go on hating him. Begin to love him now, and help him into the loveliness which is his. Do not hate him although you can. The personalty, I say, though clouded, besmeared, defiled with the wrong, lies deeper than the wrong, and indeed, so far as the wrong has reached it, is by the wrong injured, yea, so far, it may be, destroyed.

But those who will not acknowledge the claim of love, may yet acknowledge the claim of justice. There are who would shrink with horror from the idea of doing injustice to those, from the idea of loving whom they would shrink with equal horror. But if it is impossible, as I believe, without love to be just, much more cannot justice co-exist with hate. The pure eye for the true vision of another's claims can only go with the loving heart. The man who hates can hardly be deli-

cate in doing justice, say to his neighbour's love, to his neighbour's predilections and peculiarities. It is hard enough to be just to our friends; and how shall our enemies fare with us? For justice demands that we shall think rightly of our neighbour as certainly as that we shall neither steal his goods nor bear false witness against him. Man is not made for justice from his fellow, but for love, which is greater than justice, and by including supersedes justice. *Mere* justice is an impossibility, a fiction of analysis. It does not exist between man and man, save relatively to human *law*. Justice to be justice must be much more than justice. Love is the law of our condition, without which we can no more render justice than a man can keep a straight line walking in the dark. The eye is not single, and the body is not full of light. No man who is even indifferent to his brother can recognize the claims which his humanity has upon him. Nay, the very indifference itself is an injustice.

I have taken for granted that the fault lies with the

enemy so considered, for upon the primary rocks would I build my foundation. But the question must be put to each man by himself, "Is my neighbour indeed my enemy, or am I my neighbour's enemy, and so take him to be mine?—awful thought! Or, if he be mine, am not I his? Am I not refusing to acknowledge the child of the kingdom within his bosom, so killing the child of the kingdom within my own?" Let us claim for ourselves no more indulgence than we give to him. Such honesty will end in severity at home and clemency abroad. For we are accountable for the ill in ourselves, and have to kill it; for the good in our neighbour, and have to cherish it. He only, in the name and power of God, can kill the bad in him; we can cherish the good in him by being good to it across all the evil fog that comes between our love and his good.

Nor ought it to be forgotten that this fog is often the result of misapprehension and mistake, giving rise to all kinds of indignations, resentments, and regrets.

Scarce anything about us is just as it seems, but at the core there is truth enough to dispel all falsehood and reveal life as unspeakably divine. O brother, sister, across this weary fog, dim-lighted by the faint torches of our truth-seeking, I call to the divine in thee, which is mine, not to rebuke thee, not to rouse thee, not to say "Why hatest thou me?" but to say "I love thee; in God's name I love thee." And I will wait until the true self looks out of thine eyes, and knows the true self in me.

But in the working of the Divine Love upon the race, my enemy is doomed to cease to be my enemy, and to become my friend. One flash of truth towards me would destroy my enmity at once; one hearty confession of wrong, and our enmity passes away; from each comes forth the brother who was inside the enemy all the time. For this The Truth is at work. In the faith of this, let us love the enemy now, accepting God's work in reversion, as it were; let us believe as seeing his yet invisible triumph, clasping

and holding fast our brother, in defiance of the changeful wiles of the wicked enchantment which would persuade our eyes and hearts that he is not our brother, but some horrible thing, hateful and hating.

But again I must ask, What if *we* are in the wrong and do the wrong, and hate because we have injured? What then? Why, then, let us cry to God as from the throat of hell; struggle, as under the weight of a spiritual incubus; cry, as knowing the vile disease that cleaveth fast unto us; cry, as possessed of an evil spirit; cry, as one buried alive, from the sepulchre of our evil consciousness, that He would take pity upon us the chief of sinners, the most wretched and vile of men, and send some help to lift us from the fearful pit and the miry clay. Nothing will help but the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, the spirit of the Father and the Brother casting out and revealing. It will be with tearing and foaming, with a terrible cry and a lying as one dead, that such a

demon will go out. But what a vision will then arise in the depths of the purified soul!

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect." "Love your enemies, and ye shall be the children of the highest." It is the divine glory to forgive.

Yet a time will come when the Unchangeable will cease to forgive; when it will no more belong to his perfection to love his enemies; when he will look calmly, and have his children look calmly too, upon the ascending smoke of the everlasting torments of our strong brothers, our beautiful sisters! Nay, alas! the brothers are weak now; the sisters are ugly now!

O brother, believe it not. "O Christ!" the redeemed would cry, "where art thou, our strong Jesus? Come, our grand brother. See the suffering brothers down below! See the tormented sisters! Come, Lord of Life! Monarch of Suffering! Redeem them. For us, we will go down into the burning, and see

whether we cannot at least carry through the howling flames a drop of water to cool their tongues."

Believe it not, my brother, lest it quench forgiveness in thee, and thou be not forgiven, but go down with those thy brothers to the torment; whence, if God were not better than that phantom *thou* callest God, thou shouldst *never* come out; but whence assuredly thou shalt come out when thou hast paid the uttermost farthing; when thou hast learned of God in hell what thou didst refuse to learn of him upon the gentle-toned earth; what the sunshine and the rain could not teach thee, nor the sweet compunctions of the seasons, nor the stately visitings of the morn and the eventide, nor the human face divine, nor the word that was nigh thee in thy heart and in thy mouth —the story of Him who was mighty to save, because he was perfect in love.

O Father, thou art All-in-all, perfect beyond the longing of thy children, and we are all and altogether thine. Thou wilt make us pure and loving and free.

We shall stand fearless in thy presence, because perfect in thy love. Then shall thy children be of good cheer, infinite in the love of each other, and eternal in thy love. Lord Jesus, let the heart of a child be given to us; that so we may arise from the grave of our dead selves and die no more, but see face to face *the God of the Living.*

THE GOD OF THE LIVING.

He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.—St Luke xx. 38.

IT is a recurring cause of perplexity in our Lord's teaching, that he is too simple for us; that while we are questioning with ourselves about the design of Solomon's carving upon some gold-plated door of the temple, he is speaking about the foundations of Mount Zion, yea, of the earth itself, upon which it stands. If the reader of the Gospel supposes that our Lord was here using a verbal argument with the Sadducees, namely, "I *am* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; therefore they *are*," he will be astonished that no Sadducee was found with courage enough to reply: "All that God meant was to introduce himself

to Moses as the same God who had aided and protected his fathers while they were alive, saying, I am he that was the God of thy fathers. They found me faithful. Thou, therefore, listen to me, and thou too shalt find me faithful *unto* the death."

But no such reply suggested itself even to the Sadducees of that day, for their eastern nature could see argument beyond logic. Shall God call himself the God of the dead, of those who were alive once, but whom he either could not or would not keep alive? Is that the Godhood, and its relation to those who worship it? The changeless God of an ever-born and ever-perishing torrent of life; of which each atom cries with burning heart, *My God!* and straightway passes into the Godless cold! "Trust in me, for I took care of your fathers once upon a time, though they are gone now. Worship and obey me, for I will be good to you for threescore years and ten, or thereabouts; and after that, when you are not, and the world goes on all the same without you, I will call

myself your God still." God changes not. Once God he is always God. If he has once said to a man, "I am thy God, and that man has died the death of the Sadducee's creed," then we have a right to say that God is the God of the dead.

"And wherefore should he not be so far the God of the dead, if during the time allotted to them here, he was the faithful God of the living?" What God-like relation can the ever-living, life-giving, changeless God hold to creatures who partake not of his life, who have death at the very core of their being, are not worth their Maker's keeping alive? To let his creatures die would be to change, to abjure his God-hood, to cease to be that which he had made himself. If they are not worth keeping alive, then his creating is a poor thing, and he is not so great, nor so divine as even the poor thoughts of those his dying creatures have been able to imagine him. But our Lord says, "All live unto him." With Him death is not. Thy life sees our life, O Lord. All of whom *all* can be said,

are present to thee. Thou thinkest about us, eternally more than we think about thee. The little life that burns within the body of this death, glows unquenchable in thy true-seeing eyes. If thou didst forget us for a moment then indeed death would be. But unto thee we live. The beloved pass from our sight, but they pass not from thine. This that we call death, is but a form in the eyes of men. It looks something final, an awful cessation, an utter change. It seems not probable that there is anything beyond. But if God could see us before we were, and make us after his ideal, that we shall have passed from the eyes of our friends can be no argument that he beholds us no longer. "All live unto Him." Let the change be ever so great, ever so imposing; let the unseen life be ever so vague to our conception, it is not against reason to hope that God could see Abraham, after his Isaac had ceased to see him; saw Isaac after Jacob ceased to see him; saw Jacob after some of the Sadducees had begun to doubt whether there

ever had been a Jacob at all. He remembers them; that is, he carries them in his mind: he of whom God thinks, lives. He takes to himself the name of *Their God.* The Living One cannot name himself after the dead; when the very Godhead lies in the giving of life. Therefore they must be alive. If he speaks of them, remembers his own loving thoughts of them, would he not have kept them alive if he could; and if he could not, how could he create them? Can it be an easier thing to call into life than to keep alive?

"But if they live to God, they are aware of God. And if they are aware of God, they are conscious of their own being: Whence then the necessity of a resurrection?"

For their relation to others of God's children in mutual revelation; and for fresh revelation of God to all.—But let us inquire what is meant by the resurrection of the body. "With what body do they come?"

Surely we are not required to believe that the same body is raised again. That is against science, common

sense, Scripture. St Paul represents the matter quite otherwise. One feels ashamed of arguing such a puerile point. Who could wish his material body which has indeed died over and over again since he was born, never remaining for one hour composed of the same matter, its endless activity depending upon its endless change, to be fixed as his changeless possession, such as it may then be, at the moment of death, and secured to him in worthless identity for the ages to come? A man's material body will be to his consciousness at death no more than the old garment he throws aside at night, intending to put on a new and a better in the morning. To desire to keep the old body seems to me to argue a degree of sensual materialism excusable only in those pagans who in their Elysian fields could hope to possess only such a thin, fleeting, dreamy, and altogether funebrial existence, that they might well long for the thicker, more tangible bodily being in which they had experienced the pleasures of a tumultuous life on the upper world. As well might

a Christian desire that the hair which has been shorn from him through all his past life should be restored to his risen and glorified head.

Yet not the less is the doctrine of the Resurrection gladdening as the sound of the silver trumpet of its visions, needful as the very breath of life to our longing souls. Let us know what it means, and we shall see that it is thus precious.

Let us first ask what is the use of this body of ours. It is the means of Revelation to us, the *camera* in which God's eternal shows are set forth. It is by the body that we come into contact with Nature, with our fellow-men, with all their revelations of God to us. It is through the body that we receive all the lessons of passion, of suffering, of love, of beauty, of science. It is through the body that we are both trained outwards from ourselves, and driven inwards into our deepest selves to find God. There is glory and might in this vital evanescence, this slow glacier-like flow of clothing and revealing matter, this ever uptossed rainbow of tangible

humanity. It is no less of God's making than the spirit that is clothed therein.

We cannot yet have learned all that we are meant to learn through the body. How much of the teaching even of this world can the most diligent and most favoured man have exhausted before he is called to leave it! Is all that remains to be lost? Who that has loved this earth can but believe that the spiritual body of which St Paul speaks will be a yet higher channel of such revelation? The meek who have found that their Lord spake true, and have indeed inherited the earth, who have seen that all matter is radiant of spiritual meaning, who would not cast a sigh after the loss of mere animal pleasure, would, I think, be the least willing to be without a body, to be unclothed without being again clothed upon. Who, after centuries of glory in heaven, would not rejoice to behold once more that patient-headed child of winter and spring, the meek snowdrop? In whom, amidst the golden choirs, would not the vision of an old sun-

set wake such a song as the ancient dwellers of the earth would with gently flattened palm hush their throbbing harps to hear?

All this revelation, however, would render only *a* body necessary, not this body. The fulness of the word *Resurrection* would be ill met if this were all. We need not only a body to convey revelation to us, but a body to reveal us to others. The thoughts, feelings, imaginations which arise in us, must have their garments of revelation whereby shall be made manifest the unseen world within us to our brothers and sisters around us; else is each left in human loneliness. Now, if this be one of the uses my body served on earth before, the new body must be like the old. Nay, it must be the same body, glorified as we are glorified, with all that was distinctive of each from his fellows more visible than ever before. The accidental, the non-essential, the unrevealing, the incomplete will have vanished. That which made the body what it was in the eyes of those who loved us will be tenfold there.

Will not this be the resurrection of the body? of the same body though not of the same dead matter? Every eye shall see the beloved, every heart will cry, "My own again!—more mine because more himself than ever I beheld him!" For do we not say on earth, "He is not himself to-day," or "She looks her own self;" "She is more like herself than I have seen her for long"? And is not this when the heart is glad and the face is radiant? For we carry a better likeness of our friends in our hearts than their countenances, save at precious seasons, manifest to us.

Who will dare to call anything less than this a resurrection? Oh, how the letter killeth! There are who can believe that the dirt of their bodies will rise the same as it went down to the friendly grave, who yet doubt if they will know their friends when they rise again. And they call *that* believing in the resurrection!

What! shall a man love his neighbour as himself, and must he be content not to know him in heaven? Better be content to lose our consciousness, and

know ourselves no longer. What! shall God be the God of the families of the earth, and shall the love that he has thus created towards father and mother, brother and sister, wife and child, go moaning and longing to all eternity; or worse, far worse, die out of our bosoms? Shall God be God, and shall this be the end?

Ah, my friends! what will resurrection or life be to me, how shall I continue to love God as I have learned to love him through you, if I find he cares so little for this human heart of mine, as to take from me the gracious visitings of your faces and forms? True, I might have a gaze at Jesus, now and then; but he would not be so good as I had thought him. And how should I see him if I could not see you? God will not take you, has not taken you from me to bury you out of my sight in the abyss of his own unfathomable being, where I cannot follow and find you, myself lost in the same awful gulf. No, our God is an unveiling, a revealing God. He will raise

you from the dead, that I may behold you; that that which vanished from the earth may again stand forth, looking out of the same eyes of eternal love and truth, holding out the same mighty hand of brotherhood, the same delicate and gentle, yet strong hand of sisterhood, to me, this me that knew you and loved you in the days gone by. I shall not care that the matter of the forms I loved a thousand years ago has returned to mingle with the sacred goings on of God's science, upon that far-off world wheeling its nursery of growing loves and wisdoms through space; I shall not care that the muscle which now sends the ichor through your veins is not formed of the very particles which once sent the blood to the pondering brain, the flashing eye, or the nervous right arm; I shall not care, I say, so long as it is yourselves that are before me, beloved; so long as through these forms I know that I look on my own, on my loving souls of the ancient time; so long as my spirits have got garments of revealing after their own old lovely fashion, garments

to reveal themselves to me. The new shall then be dear as the old, and for the same reason, that it reveals the old love. And in the changes which, thank God, must take place when the mortal puts on immortality, shall we not feel that the nobler our friends are, the more they are themselves; that the more the idea of each is carried out in the perfection of beauty, the more like they are to what we thought them in our most exalted moods, to that which we saw in them in the rarest moments of profoundest communion, to that which we beheld through the veil of all their imperfections when we loved them the truest?

Lord, evermore give us this Resurrection, like thine own in the body of thy Transfiguration. Let us see and hear, and know, and be seen, and heard, and known, as thou seest, hearest, and knowest. Give us glorified bodies through which to reveal the glorified thoughts which shall then inhabit us, when not only shalt thou reveal God, but each of us shall reveal thee.

And for this, Lord Jesus, come thou, the child, the obedient God, that we may be one with thee, and with every man and woman whom thou hast made, in the Father.

THE END.

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